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Edith

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Edith

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre and Communication Arts
Creative Writing

by

Henry Griffin

B.A. Loyola University, 1992

May, 2013

Acknowledgements

A terminal degree such as an MFA suggests an accounting of all the people who have helped me become a writer. An abbreviated list must begin with my parents, William and Emilie Griffin, writers both, who have authored thirty books between them. They forced me to read, inspired me to write, even when my obsession with movies led me away from their literary concentration.

Robert Fecas, my high school theology teacher, offered extra credit for anyone who would go to Loyola's Film Buffs Institute on a weeknight to see a French film that turned out to be Rene Clement's *Forbidden Games*. Though I was already a film obsessive from a young age, this screening diverted my attention from Spielberg and Hitchcock toward a spectrum of storytelling that completed my worldview. It is likely that the many nights I spent at FBI (instead of doing my high school homework) led to my attending Loyola in 1987.

Special mention must be made of my film professor Andrew Horton, who came to Loyola after teaching screenwriting at UNO. While I never studied screenwriting with him (or anyone else), his Modern European Film and Literature course turned me onto Bunuel, Bresson, and Kusturica. My best writing teacher was Fr. Raymond Schroth, S.J.. His tutelage in the ways of Strunk, White and Zinsser prepared me for a career in journalism. However, I found that the rigors of reportage lent themselves equally to dramatic writing, and I entered the world of screenwriting with an editor's predilection toward tireless revision.

I wrote my first screenplay alone, and quickly sold it, thanks to my representation of seventeen years: Rick Berg, once my agent, now my manager, and John Sloss, my attorney. My work as screenwriter and script doctor for various studios led me to several on-the-job mentors: Gore Verbinski, director of my first studio picture, *Mouse Hunt*; Walter Parkes & Laurie MacDonald, the creative heads of DreamWorks at the time of my employment; Stuart Cornfeld, the producer at Red Hour Films who worked with me for a year on a remake of *The Hot Rock*.

In the course of my MFA experience at UNO, I have found myself a student of my colleagues, who have served ably as mentors: Amanda Boyden, the fiction writer who is a currently working screenwriter; Joanna Leake, the former CWW chair who has now read nine of my screenplays; and particularly current chair Rick Barton, who has read each of those nine, and also taken personal interest in my achievement of this Master's degree. His support during this process can not be underestimated. That the character of Edith shares a job title with all three of my committee members was a welcome coincidence, but one that lent the defense process an added usefulness, one that will aid the screenplay toward its ultimate goal of production.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - 1971 - NIGHT

MUSIC: "Village of the Virgins," by the Vijay Iyer Trio.

NANCY MISNER (23) is lost in a copy of *Moby Dick* as the window facing the street in front of her is sheeted with rain.

She looks up to see that, while she has been reading, a flood is rising. There seems to be no leaving.

She turns to face the proprietor of the bohemian cafe, ALAN BARRACLOUGH (25), who points to the television on the counter, an old black-and-white.

Nash Roberts, a 70's weatherman, is using markers and posterboard to illustrate Hurricane Edith, a storm bearing in on Southern Louisiana.

She looks back outside: her car isn't going anywhere.

She looks back at Alan, whose expression reads: I'm not going anywhere either.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - 1971 - NIGHT - LATER

They share a bottle of wine, laughing as the lights go out.

INT. WOODEN STAIRWELL - NIGHT - LATER

Using his flashlight, he leads her up a flight of stairs to his apartment.

INT. ALAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - LATER

He lights a candle, which illuminates both of their smiling faces. They are having fun.

He moves to the kitchen, to refill their glasses until he sees her shadow flickering on the wall in front of him.

She stands in front of the light, dropping her jacket on the bed. She is disrobing.

He watches as she unzips her dress.

They embrace.

Candlelight projects the pair coupling as they roll across the bed and onto the floor.

INT. APARTMENT - 1971 - DAY

Nancy, months later, exits the bathroom to nod to her boyfriend Alan: yes, she's pregnant.

Alan, in response, produces a ring box and drops to his knees: will you?

She screams: yes.

INT. MATERNITY WARD - 1972 - DAY

A gaggle of nurses laugh as they trade and pretend to smoke some pink cigars: IT'S A GIRL!

Alan karate kicks in the hallway: he's a new dad.

INT. INCUBATOR - DAY

An hours-old baby girl is lowered into a crib. A prominent tag at the head of the crib reads the girl's name: EDITH.

FADE TO BLACK (though the name stays long enough to become the film's title.

END MUSIC.

CREDITS OVER:

EDITH
...and that's how I got my name.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - 2013 - NIGHT

EDITH BARRACLOUGH (39) looks expectantly across a romantic dinner table at MARCUS PYNCHON (42, African-American, a little heavy, bookish).

EDITH
So, how about you?

MARCUS
Marcus is my grandfather's name.

EDITH
And what was he like?

MARCUS

I never knew him. He died when I was really young. He was a butcher, I think?

EDITH

Oh. How did your parents meet?

MARCUS

I don't know.

EDITH

You don't know?

MARCUS

I mean, mutual friends, I think.

Now she's quizzing him.

EDITH

How long did they date before they were married?

MARCUS

I don't know, a year?

EDITH

When's their wedding anniversary?

MARCUS

August something. They got divorced when I was four.

EDITH

I'm sorry.

MARCUS

I'm not. I mean, I have no real memory of their marriage. No basis for comparison. Double birthday, double Christmas, whatever.

EDITH

Have you ever been married?

MARCUS

God, no.

Edith's eyes reveal that this was the wrong answer.

EDITH

Not in the cards for you?

MARCUS

Never met the right woman.

EDITH

And what are you looking for?

MARCUS

Long term? An intelligent, well-spoken and well-read, classy, thrill-seeking Black woman.

Edith suppresses a frown.

EDITH

She has to be Black? You wouldn't date a woman outside your race?

MARCUS

I would, of course. But I'm an African-American lit scholar. A mixed marriage wouldn't look great.

EDITH

If you're hung up on appearances, no.

MARCUS

Did you think this was a date?

This catches Edith off guard. She did.

EDITH

(laughing it off)
No, of course not.

An awkward silence.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Edith walking back to her car, alone, talking to herself (as is her habit).

EDITH

Did I think this was a date? No, I assumed you were taking me out to dinner ironically.

INT. EDITH'S CAR - NIGHT

She continues her monologue on her drive home.

EDITH

No, Marcus. When you showed up in that tie I thought you were taking me to small claims court, or maybe putt putt.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The next day, Edith is walking through the woods, exercising, and working out her response.

EDITH

Who says "date" anymore"? Is that the only reason a man is on his best behavior?

(trying something else)

So you wouldn't marry me, but you would sleep with me? So I'm auditioning to be your concubine?

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Now, Edith is curled up in a stylish reading chair in a home office, scribbling in a notebook.

EDITH

(v.o.)

"Colleen knew she was in for a long night when he showed up for dinner in an Italian restaurant wearing a golf tie."

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - OFFICE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Now Edith is sitting at a laptop, transcribing her notebook.

EDITH

(v.o.)

"His rusty cufflinks looked like a long forgotten bar mitzvah present. I told him they looked neglected. 'Sure,' he responded. 'So's my Judaism. Are those for real?' He was indicating my breasts. I nodded. 'Are you?'"

Satisfied, she shuts her laptop screen, filling the screen with BLACKNESS.

END CREDITS.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

Establishing shot of a red brick commuter college.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A horseshoe-shaped graduate creative writing workshop is in progress. The students are in their twenties and thirties, of mixed races and genders. Edith, the instructor, listens intently.

One young white male, FRANKLIN (23), is reading a short story aloud as the other students and Edith look on analytically.

FRANKLIN

"...and so what if the seventh floor dorm virgin got away. There would be more virgins for him to deflower. More hymens to bust. Yes, for now and forever he would be... 'the Hymen Buster.'"

Franklin looks up from his manuscript hopefully. Edith hides her horror and tries to think of something constructive.

EDITH

Well, that was that. Does anybody have any comments?

STUDENT #1

I liked it.

STUDENT #1 (CONT'D)

Me, too. Great work.

STUDENT #3

I don't know if you're supposed to use hymen in some magazines.

FRANKLIN

What do you think, Edith?

EDITH

The hymen thing? Neither here nor there. It certainly isn't the reason that this story isn't going to get published...

(off Franklin's reaction)

...in this form. Sometimes the reason that your writing can appear false is that you don't know your characters. You know the ones based on yourself. You may know the...

FRANKLIN
...hymen buster?

EDITH
Thank you, the hymen buster. But
what about his victims?

FRANKLIN
You mean conquests?

EDITH
Whatever, yes. The women. Often,
what happens is that the supporting
characters are projections of the
author, and remain flat. They do
what the protagonist needs, or what
the story requires.

FRANKLIN
But all the girls are random.

EDITH
There's no such thing as a random
girl. They are random to him, but
not to themselves. You have to make
sure that the choices that the
characters make are believable. Why
would all these young women sleep
with such a detestable man?

FRANKLIN
The story is autobiographical.

EDITH
Fair enough. Why do all these women
sleep with you?

FRANKLIN
Honestly, I don't know. And I guess
I never cared. I see your point.

EDITH
If you can only write men and never
understand women, you're crippled
as a writer. You'll only be able to
write about the British navy, or
street gangs, or homosexual
subcultures.

FRANKLIN
I'm not gay.

EDITH

Probably not. You're obviously not a woman either. You're a man, and you write like a man, which can be frustrating.

Edith catches herself.

EDITH (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to be mean. I'm not trying to criticize you. I'm here to critique your work. You just have to know your subject. Research, preparation, empathy. These are the tools you're going to need to break through to the next level with your fiction...

A student in the corner of her eye distracts her.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Excuse me, are you texting?

STUDENT #1

(defensively)

No, I'm googling something. For this class?

Another student checks her phone as well, and notes the time.

STUDENT #2

It's eleven-thirty.

EDITH

Great. See you next Monday.

The class breaks. Edith sighs. She isn't getting through.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The weekly faculty meeting of the English department. A crusty but benign CHAIR sits at the head of the table. Eight or so other professors line the sides, including Edith.

CHAIR

All right now, people, summer is almost here. You know what that means. Sharon is out with maternity leave, and we need someone to fill in for her in the Madrid program. Any takers? What about you, Mabel?

MABEL ARNETT, (60's, gypsy chic), cleans her glasses.

MABEL

I'm too old for that kind of thing.

CHAIR

Edith?

EDITH

No thanks.

CHAIR

Don't tell me you're too old.

EDITH

Very funny. It doesn't pay enough,
people drink more than they learn,
and my garden would die.

CHAIR

Anyone else? Marcus?

We now see that Marcus, Edith's non-date, is a member of this
faculty meeting too.

MARCUS

Sorry, chief. I'm going to stick
around and finish my book.

CHAIR

Someone's going to do it. Do I have
to beg?

No eye contact from his faculty.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Edith is having lunch with Mabel: salads and cocktails.

MABEL

Okay, give it up. How was your date
with Marcus?

EDITH

I didn't go on a date with Marcus.

MABEL

You said you were going to.

EDITH

Oh, I did tell you. Ugh. Let's just
say he and I have competing
narratives.

MABEL

Well, then why don't you want to teach in Spain?

EDITH

What's the connection?

MABEL

I would have guessed you were going to stay and spend the summer with him. Why else would you skip Spain?

EDITH

Should I do it?

MABEL

Of course, it's a big party. I was in the Greek program ten years in a row. You'll get laid, certainly.

EDITH

Yikes. What, with a student?

MABEL

No, they screw each other. Maybe another teacher. Maybe, gasp, a European?

EDITH

Mabel! I think you're the one who needs to get laid.

MABEL

It isn't that important. If it was I'd probably have gotten married.

EDITH

Did you ever want to get married?

MABEL

Maybe, at some point I did. But it's hard to find a guy who wasn't looking to breed me.

EDITH

You never wanted kids?

MABEL

Nope. I was afraid I'd never write again. Aren't you? You should be.

EDITH

Half the stories I've ever written
came out of my childhood. Childhood
is magical. Wasn't yours?

MABEL

Yes, but parenthood isn't just
revisiting your own childhood.

EDITH

I know that. I've spent half a life
trying to figure out who I am. And
I think I'd be good at helping a
little someone do the same thing.

MABEL

Well, maybe you'll work it out with
Marcus.

EDITH

Can we change the subject? What are
you writing?

MABEL

A poetry cycle, as usual. It's
about turntables. Mostly broken
ones. It's about a man who travels
around fixing old record players,
which allows people to resurrect
the souls of the dead. It's going
to be great, eventually. Right now
it still a total nightmare. I
probably just need to find someone
to fix my actual turntable. And
you, what are you working on?

EDITH

Nothing right now. I'm stuck.

MABEL

So you might as well go to Spain.
You'll either get laid or do some
great writing. You'll either get a
good time or a good story.

EDITH

I'll probably have a more
productive time staying home and
growing tomatoes.

MABEL

Are you going to spray them with
sevendust?

EDITH

You know how I feel about
pesticide.

MABEL

Aphid City, then.

EDITH

They are plants. They should be
able to grow without chemicals.
What are you planting this summer?

MABEL

Early girls, better boys, mortgage
lifters, maybe some sweet millions.

EDITH

Those are all kinds of tomatoes?
Sweet millions?

MABEL

It's a cherry.

EDITH

I love creole tomatoes. There's
nothing like a Creole tomato to
make me feel like I'm in contact
with the Almighty.

MABEL

But Creole tomatoes are man made.

EDITH

They are?

MABEL

The Creole tomato cultivar was
originally bred in a lab at LSU.

EDITH

The Creole tomato was invented?
That's depressing. I thought only
God could make a tomato.

MABEL

"How ignorant art thou in thy pride
of wisdom."

EDITH

Who's that, you?

MABEL

(shaking her head no)
Frankenstein.

(MORE)

MABEL (CONT'D)

If it makes you feel better, the
Almighty created LSU. Just ask
anybody in their football program.

EXT. EDITH'S GARDEN - DAY

An overhead shot of Edith tending her garden. It is a wreck.
Her plans to grow tomatoes this summer are a lot of talk. She
looks around, not sure where to begin.

INT. CHAIN BOOKSTORE - DAY

Edith tries to negotiate the aisles of this megastore. She
approaches a salesperson at the information kiosk, who is
angled away from Edith, looking down at a computer.

EDITH

I'm trying to find books about
tomatoes?

SALESPERSON

I know, I know.

EDITH

What do you mean, you know?

SALESPERSON

Well, what do you want me to do
about it?

EDITH

(raising her voice)

Excuse me?

The salesperson looks up at Edith for the first time, and we
see the Bluetooth earpiece in her ear: she's been talking to
someone else on the phone.

SALESPERSON

Sorry, what?

EDITH

Can you take that out, please?

SALESPERSON

I don't have to, what do you need?

EDITH

I'm trying to find books about
tomatoes-

SALESPERSON

Shut up, I'm with a customer. Books about what?

EDITH

Breeding tomatoes. I'm trying to breed tomatoes?

SALESPERSON

Nine A.

The salesperson goes back to her conversation and Edith walks to aisle 9A.

She glances at a few titles before realizing she's in the women's health section.

She clucks to herself, blaming yet another young person who can't listen.

She contemplates going back to the kiosk, but a title catches her eye: SINGLE MOTHERHOOD AFTER FORTY. An eyebrow raises.

She pulls the book out and starts flipping through it.

BARRY

(o.s.)

Ms. Barraclough?

Edith reacts with shock at being seen. She closes the book and turns to see BARRY (20).

EDITH

Hi...

BARRY

Barry Fitzwalter? I'm in your 4551 class?

EDITH

Of course. What are you doing here?

BARRY

It's a bookstore. I'm here to get free wi-fi. You?

EDITH

Oh, research. For something I'm writing.

BARRY

Really? What are you writing?

EDITH

I don't want to say. If you talk about it, you'll never do it.

BARRY

Oh. Well, nice seeing you.

He leaves, and she shelves the book.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY.

Edith lectures for twenty or so college seniors. This is an undergraduate class, in which Edith, instead of workshopping, is lecturing to a small crowd.

EDITH

There are two important questions in every story. The first one is: "Then what happens?" How will the plot turn out? The other one is...anyone? "Why?" The question is why. What makes people behave the way they do?

She starts drawing on the board: PHYSIOLOGY.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Well, Lajos Egri, in his *Art of Dramatic Writing*, has a theory of human motivation. Egri says that we are made up by our physiology: height, weight, race and so forth. This is the seed.

She keeps writing: SOCIOLOGY.

EDITH (CONT'D)

By our sociology: class, big family, small family. This is the soil in which the seed is planted. And the seed and the soil combine to make the character's psychology.

She finishes writing. The board reads:

PHYSIOLOGY + SOCIOLOGY = PSYCHOLOGY

A student raises her hand.

STUDENT

Which one is more important, physiology or sociology?

EDITH

Neither.

STUDENT

You used math symbols, I figured you could quantify them.

EDITH

Well, that's an interesting way to put it. Each character who has some sort of struggle may be wrestling with his or her nature and nurture. If I'm Tarzan, should I behave like a savage, or an aristocrat? If I'm Jesus, should I behave like the son of God or a nice Jewish boy?

STUDENT

Do you have an opinion?

EDITH

Well, the seed, I suppose. The soil may determine if it's a big tomato, a healthy tomato, how many, but it can't make it into anything but a tomato. So, nature trumps nurture?

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY

Edith lives in a shotgun house, the kind where all the rooms are connected. She paces as she talks on the wireless phone.

EDITH

Hi, I was calling to find out your hours. Uh huh, and do you take walk-ins or do you have to make an appointment? For what? Consultation, tour, that sort of thing. What's your address?

Edith finds a pen (she has them everywhere) and writes down the address.

EDITH (CONT'D)

And how long does the meeting take? And do you have parking nearby? Is it public parking? Is it in front, or in back? Okay, great. Does it have to be my real name?

EXT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith drives her beat-up Toyota, craning her neck to check street numbers as she goes. She locates the Family Horizons Fertility Clinic (and a small crowd of demonstrators in front), sees the available parking, which is very visible, and parks two blocks away.

She walks two blocks, past many free spots, to find the clinic. She glances back and forth, making sure that no one has noticed her, then enters the clinic through a rear door.

INT. FAMILY HORIZONS FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

This clinic has taken great steps to counteract the antiseptic feeling of a hospital. Lots of plant life, music, area rugs. A decorator's touch.

Edith enters. When she sees she is not the only woman waiting, she doesn't take off her sunglasses.

DR. TIMOTHY, a middle-aged male in a lab coat, comes out to greet Edith with a raised hand.

DR. TIMOTHY
Miss Barraclough? I'm Doctor
Timothy.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - HALLWAY

Dr. Timothy leads Edith down the hallway.

DR. TIMOTHY
Are you nervous?

EDITH
This is my first visit to a sperm
bank.

DR. TIMOTHY
We think of ourselves as a
fertility clinic, if that helps. We
help couples, or individuals
conceive a child when they aren't
able to by themselves. Are you with
someone?

EDITH
No, not right now. Nor will I be,
probably. I'm here on my own.

DR. TIMOTHY

That's fine. We can do everything from helping you find a donor to the full process of insemination.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - OFFICE - DAY.

Edith is sitting across from Dr. Timothy, who is behind a messy desk.

EDITH

I guess I'm looking for a donor.

DR. TIMOTHY

That's a great start. Do you know what you're looking for in a donor?

EDITH

Can I see what you have? Is there a book to flip through?

DR. TIMOTHY

Modern cryobank technology allows us much more variety than what we could keep in this building. We're not restricted geographically, meaning we can obtain specimens from all over the country and even the world. This frees you to be specific as to what kind of donor you're interested in. Different ethnicities, backgrounds, so on.

EDITH

Can I meet the donor?

DR. TIMOTHY

No, their participation is confidential. But that is only to protect their identity. Any relevant genetic question is answerable.

EDITH

What, like height, weight?

DR. TIMOTHY

Eye color, hair, skin color, skin tone and complexion. Ethnic background, any athletic pursuits, hobbies, education, languages spoken, IQ.

EDITH
Astrological sign?

DR. TIMOTHY
We have dates of birth, I'm sure we
could work from there.

EDITH
Relationship history?

DR. TIMOTHY
I'm sure some of them include that.

EDITH
Photos? Video?

DR. TIMOTHY
Most of our donors aren't
interested in divulging too much of
their personal lives. But I can
show you their baby photos, which
might give you a sense of what your
child might look like.

Dr. Timothy reaches into a drawer and pulls out a folder.

DR. TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
Many of them write essays. If you'd
like to see some examples.

She hands Edith the folder and stands: this meeting is over.

DR. TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
So take your time, look it all over
and give me a call. Is there
anything else?

EDITH
Where do they produce the specimen?

His brow wrinkles. This question doesn't come up much.

INT. DONATION CHAMBER - DAY.

A gray, antiseptic room with several stalls, like a restroom.

Dr. Timothy stands in the doorway as Edith walks toward a
stall and tentatively pushes the door open.

Inside is a soft chair, a night stand with a stack of porn
magazines, a television/DVD player, and a stack of DVDs.

Edith examines a tray of lotions and oils and a stack of towels. Dr. Timothy is unclear why she's examining so closely. Edith notices the television, and a stack of dvds. She examines the titles with distaste.

EDITH

It doesn't seem very medical. I mean, why do they have to watch this stuff?

DR. TIMOTHY

(picking words carefully)

It's a standard practice to cultivate a comfortable environment for men to stimulate themselves. It counteracts the institutional surroundings, allows them to use their fantasies to produce the specimen.

Edith picks up a DVD: *Splendor in the Ass*.

EDITH

You don't think that their perversions in some way affect the specimen, do you?

DR. TIMOTHY

There's certainly no medical evidence to support that, no. Do you...spend a lot of time with men?

EDITH

I'm not a lesbian, if that's what you're asking. Why do you want to know?

DR. TIMOTHY

No reason.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Now Edith is teaching a freshman composition class. Thirty eighteen-year-olds, paying minimal attention. Her tone of voice suggests that she is trying to train a dog.

EDITH

Okay, the final drafts of your essays are due Friday. Friday. That's non-negotiable. I need all of them for the weekend or there is a twenty-point penalty. Twenty points.

(MORE)

EDITH (CONT'D)

Remember the difference between
it's and its. Between your and
you're. Among there, their and
they're. Never use a long word when
a diminutive one will do.

No laughter.

EDITH (CONT'D)

A preposition at the end of a
sentence is something up with which
I will not put.

Again, crickets. Tough crowd.

EDITH (CONT'D)

A semicolon separates two
independent clauses. A semicolon is
not a colon that is winking at you.

She gives up.

EDITH (CONT'D)

All right, get out of here. Wait, a
final commandment.

(gravitas)

Each of you is born with ninety-
nine exclamation points to use for
your entire life. Use them
sparingly. Okay, now you can go.

The students begin to file out.

EDITH (CONT'D)

But you can have all the commas you
want!

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Edith is tucked in a reading chair, trying to grade some
particularly bad student work. These essays have dreadful
grammar and spelling, particularly your/you're and
there/their/they're.

She puts them down on her bedside table and notices a folder
from the clinic.

She opens it and flips through the files of several anonymous
donors. She pulls out a stack of autobiographical essays,
each with a cute BABY BOY'S PHOTO attached. She reads with
interest.

A CUTE BABY PHOTO

MALE VOICE 1

After a Rhodes scholarship I had become used to the rhythms of Oxford. I thought living in rural Nicaragua would be a cultural letdown. Anything but...

ANOTHER BABY PHOTO

MALE VOICE 2

I couldn't decide between medical school and law school. I wanted to help people, but which was the best path? My choice was clear: both. But in which order?

ANOTHER BABY PHOTO

MALE VOICE 3

I wasn't sure the best way to embark on a career as a literary translator. First I read *Anna Karenina* in the original Russian. Then I read all of the English translations. I was finally ready to do my own. But, I decided to read it in Spanish and French first.

She closes the folder: not bad at all.

She grabs her notebook and starts making notes. We see a series of qualities: tall, teeth, hair...

She checks her watch, double checks it with the time on the wall, then reaches for the phone and dials a number.

EDITH

Hi, Dr. Timothy? I came in there a few days ago, inquiring about a procedure, and I have a question.
(catching herself)
I've been reading these essays, and I was just wondering. Could my donor be Spanish?

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

Edith is back at the clinic with Dr. Timothy.

DR. TIMOTHY

Good to see you again. We didn't think you'd be back.

EDITH

It took me three months to research my Toyota.

DR. TIMOTHY

So, what are you looking for in a donor?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

As Edith reads from her notebook, Dr. Timothy inputs the information into his computer.

EDITH

Well, he's tall, and he has hair, and good teeth, and athletic. No criminal record. Reader of serious literature. And...I'm ambidextrous, which is a recessive trait, so if he was ambidextrous, then I could be sure that my child would be too.

DR. TIMOTHY

That is something we can sort for.

EDITH

And he can dance. And I'd like it if he were born in either 1966, 1978, or maybe 1954.

DR. TIMOTHY

(is that all?)
And Hispanic heritage.

EDITH

Spanish. Not Central American. European Spanish.

DR. TIMOTHY

We can see about that. Can I ask why those birth years?

EDITH

Well, that's the year of the horse in Chinese astrology, and I want the child to be a rabbit. I'm a rooster. It would just work out better.

DR. TIMOTHY

We can easily filter for birth year. Is 1990 a horse year? We'll be bound to have some of those.

Edith considers this: a child born in 1990 can be a father?

EDITH

Yes, I suppose.

DR. TIMOTHY

Good, good. Is that all? Is there anything you want your donor not to be?

EDITH

Nearby. Around.

DR. TIMOTHY

Very well. I'll see what we can come up with.

Dr. Timothy now ignores Edith and starts typing at his computer. Edith finds this awkward.

EDITH

Should I go?

DR. TIMOTHY

No, no. Found it.

Dr. Timothy presses print as Edith looks on amazed.

EDITH

That's it? You found my donor?

DR. TIMOTHY

If you like him. We can do it as early as your next ovulation.

Dr. Timothy pulls a manila folder and starts putting the papers into it.

EDITH

Actually, I'd prefer the end of the summer. August 15, in fact.

He hands Edith a thick folder. Edith takes a quick peek.

DR. TIMOTHY

Why the fifteenth? Is that Chinese Fourth of July or something?

Edith is not amused. Dr. Timothy regains his gravitas.

DR. TIMOTHY (CONT'D)
We can schedule something for the
fifteenth.

Edith writes this date down.

EDITH
So, Monday, the fifteenth. Oh, one
more thing.

DR. TIMOTHY
Yes?

EDITH
I want her to be a girl?

DR. TIMOTHY
The methods we use will give you
about an 80% chance.

EDITH
That sounds great.

Edith exhales. This was easy.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Edith sits in the bath and reads the essay of donor
#17464363678.

SPANISH VOICE
I was the youngest of thirteen
children, and my father and mother
had only planned for twelve.

She smiles. What a charmer.

SPANISH VOICE (CONT'D)
In our photographs, all of the
children were dressed alike: white
shirts, blue shorts, and a very
peculiar paisley scarf. One day I
asked my mother why she dressed us
this way. She said, "we didn't want
to leave you behind." I said, "yes,
but why the paisley scarf?" She
answered, "That is so we didn't
take home any who weren't ours."

INT. CHAIR'S OFFICE - DAY

Edith sticks her head in the office of her department's chair.

EDITH

Still need that teacher for the Madrid program?

He nods.

INT. EDITH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Meanwhile, she packs for Spain, a meticulous process in which she attempts several alignments of items in her suitcase before committing.

SPANISH VOICE

I am seven years younger than my next oldest sibling. But they never said I was an accident. Accidents and miracles are just things that happen.

EXT. MABEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Edith is dropping off her cat (in a carrier) to Mabel in the doorway of her house.

MABEL

When are you coming back?

EDITH

August 17th. Wednesday the 17th.

MABEL

Have fun.

They hug.

INT. EDITH'S KITCHEN - DAY

Edith takes a bunch of canned goods and packs them into two plastic shopping bags. She leaves one bag on the counter, and a cabinet door open, as if she has stopped in the middle of unpacking groceries.

SPANISH VOICE

I am a happy man, married with many children of my own now.
(MORE)

SPANISH VOICE (CONT'D)

But I wanted to donate in the hopes
of sharing my parents' blessing.

Edith turns on the radio in her kitchen, then turns it up
loud. She then carries the other plastic bag to...

INT. EDITH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

...the living room. She twists a gooseneck desk-attached work
light (with a pigtail fluorescent bulb) so that it casts a
powerful white light into the hallway.

SPANISH VOICE

I only hope that the happiness of
my family continues into the lives
I am touching.

She picks up a BOBBLEHEAD figurine of Edgar Allen Poe and
places it in front of the light, so that it casts a bobbling
head shadow on the wall, as if someone is home.

She hears a HONK from outside, and checks her watch.

She moves through her house to the front door, dropping the
shopping bag, deliberately.

EXT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Edith opens her front door to see that a TAXI is waiting to
take her to the airport. She motions with her hand: give me a
minute. She turns and re-enters her house.

She opens her front door and imagines that she's breaking in.
She cocks her ear: can she hear that radio? Do the bobblehead
shadow and the groceries make it seem like someone's home?

She nods: good enough. She grabs her rolling suitcase and
carry-on and moves out the front door.

CAMERA MOVES to the window, and the small crack between the
curtains, through which we can see Edith roll her bag to the
taxi, whose trunk pops open as she approaches it.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SPANISH CLASSROOM - DAY

A GOTH STUDENT (early 20's) student is reading from an iPad.

GOTH STUDENT

Shryll Dwarfenmoss brought his warhammer down with authority, deafening all of his chamberthanes. He did it again for emphasis. When the pointed ears of all the faeryfolk were cocked in his direction, he began his screed with a single word: FUUUUCK!!!!

Edith tries to keep her composure. But she hates this.

The open window reveals that this class is in Madrid.

EDITH

Well, you have something there. Did you bring that from home?

GOTH STUDENT

No, I wrote it over the weekend.

EDITH

You wouldn't think about writing something more...present? You're in Spain for the first time.

GOTH STUDENT

I only write about elves.

EDITH

Nothing else?

GOTH STUDENT

Well, I started to work on a series about zombies who solve crimes, but it seemed too derivative. Do you think that would be better?

EDITH

It just doesn't feel honest. A lot of fantasy is about people who can't deal with real life. If it was up to me I wouldn't let you write about guns for a year. No zombies or vampires for two years. Lying is easy. Telling the truth is hard.

GOTH STUDENT

Books about elves get published.

EDITH

(sadly)
Yes, they do.

INT. SPANISH BAR - NIGHT

Edith drinks with several of her DRUNK STUDENTS.

EDITH

So what have you been reading?

DRUNK STUDENT #1

I just like to write. I hate to read anybody better than me.

EDITH

You feel inferior and stop writing.

DRUNK STUDENT #1

I need to feel like I'm the greatest writer in the world, or I get frustrated.

EDITH

I bet that makes it hard to revise your work.

She turns away to another student.

EDITH (CONT'D)

And you? Reading anything good?

DRUNK STUDENT #2

I'm spending a lot of times playing video games. I use them as plot generators.

Edith gets the attention of a middle-aged man, another TEACHER in this program.

EDITH

I think I'm going to go.

TEACHER

Oh don't be a prude. Have some fun.

EDITH

I have a date with George Eliot.

She stands to leave.

INT. SPANISH HALLWAY - NIGHT

Edith, drunk, stumbles down her hallway digging for her keys.

VOICE

Edith?

Edith freaks out and drops her keys. She turns to see TYLER, one of her workshop students.

EDITH

Oh I'm sorry, are you staying here?

TYLER

Yeah, right next door. I'm here with Caitlin, having a night cap. Want to come in? We scored some shitty weed from the handyman.

Edith lets this settle in. Why is he even telling her this?

EDITH

Um, no, Taylor...

TYLER

Tyler.

EDITH

Tyler. I'm beat, but thanks.

INT. EDITH'S SPANISH BEDROOM - NIGHT

Edith stays up listening to Tyler and Caitlin's loud lovemaking in the next room, while she reads *Middlemarch*, by George Eliot.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. SPANISH RESTAURANT - DAY

An outdoor cafe. Edith smokes a cigarette and reads *Middlemarch*. She is farther along into it.

She takes a sip from her drink, and notices a tall handsome Spanish man with thick black hair.

She looks around to see any of her students in the vicinity. The coast is clear.

She takes out her camera and catches the stranger's eye.

He sees the camera. He nods, understanding, and reaches for her camera, to take her picture against the backdrop.

She poses formally at her table as he takes a photo of her.

He hands her the camera and she looks at the photo. She nods: not bad.

STRANGER

Uno mas?

She shakes her head no. He smiles, having done her a solid.

She motions that she wants to take his picture now.

He grins, flattered, and stands against his back drop.

She snaps, then looks at the results.

EDITH

(with body language)

One more, a safety. Uno mas.

He smiles again.

STRANGER

Sames? Or different?

She reacts to his English.

EDITH

Same.

She takes a second snap, which she likes better.

The stranger takes his seat nearby, flattered and confused.

Edith puts her novel down and pulls out her notebook, the one she use to scribble ideas. She begins writing.

EDITH (CONT'D)

(v.o.)

The first time I met your father, I
was in a cafe in Madrid.

A long slow zoom in towards Edith as she writes.

EDITH (CONT'D)

(v.o.)

I needed someone to take my photo,
and a stranger caught my eye. He
seemed like the kind of man you
could hand your phone to. Then he
noticed my book and asked what I
was reading. I said *Middlemarch*.
Turns out he was a fan of the book.
His name was Joaquin, and-

STRANGER

(Spanish accent)

What is your name?

Edith looks up. The stranger has joined her at her table.
Edith wasn't quite expecting this.

EDITH

Edith. Your name is...?

JAIME

I am Jaime. You are visiting?

EDITH

Yes, from New Orleans.
Nuevo...Orleans.

JAIME

Yes, I know. Jazz. The beach.

EDITH

No, we don't have a beach in New Orleans.

JAIME

No beach? Where do you go for the sand?

EDITH

I usually drive to Pensacola, which is about three hours away.

JAIME

Yes, yes, Pensacola, Texas.

EDITH

No, Pensacola is in Florida,

JAIME

I have been to the Florida Islands.
What are you doing here in Madrid?

EDITH

I am a teacher. What about you?

JAIME

I am a farmer.

EDITH

Really? What do you grow?

JAIME

Tomatoes.

Edith's lip curls: tomatoes?

EDITH

I grow tomatoes.

JAIME

No! On the island?

EDITH

New Orleans is not an island! My city is on a swamp. Very hot, very, sunny. Good for tomatoes.

JAIME

No, it's a very bad place to grow tomatoes.

EDITH

Okay, it's horrible. But why?

JAIME

The swamp, she is too humid. You should grow them somewhere that is hot, but dry.

EDITH

Oh. That explains it.

JAIME

What are you doing tonight?

EDITH

Why do you ask?

JAIME

My friends and I are going to see some music, and I'm sure you would enjoy yourself. Right over there.

He points at a nearby cafe.

JAIME (CONT'D)

Would you like to join me tonight?

EDITH

No thank you, I shouldn't.

JAIME

What does this word mean, shouldn't?

EDITH

Hmm...how about "No deberíamos"?

JAIME

Your Spanish is very good.

EDITH

Thank you.

JAIME

You've been to Mexico.

EDITH

That's right. Did I say it right?

JAIME

No deberíamos"? Si. I still don't know the meaning of the word.

Now she gets his joke.

EDITH

You're bad. It was nice to meet you, Jaime.

She leaves, and Jaime looks after her. She takes a few steps, then turns back. He's looking at her.

EDITH (CONT'D)

What time does the music start?

EXT. SPANISH HALLWAY - NIGHT

Edith, dressed up for an evening out, walks loudly down the hall. She stops at Tyler's room and knocks on the door.

He answers, wearing his boxer shorts. He takes her in.

EDITH

I'm heading down the hill. Do you need anything?

TYLER

No, thanks.

EDITH

Staying in tonight?

TYLER

Yes, I have a lot of homework.

EDITH

Oh, yeah. Sorry about that. I'm going on a date.

TYLER

Well, you look hot, if you don't mind me saying so.

EDITH

Thank you, Tyler.

She moves on, glad that she looks good.

INT. MUSIC CLUB - NIGHT

Edith watches a flamenco performance in a crowded bar, standing next to Jaime.

JAIME

You are a botanist?

EDITH

No, I teach creative writing.

JAIME

Why do you study tomatoes?

EDITH

I love to eat them, but I'm not very good at growing them. So, I thought they might be worth writing about.

JAIME

I hope you will still be here on the 19th.

EDITH

Of August? Why?

JAIME

We have a festival in my hometown Buñol.

EDITH

Buñol?

JAIME

Yes, it is in Valencia.

EDITH

I'm sorry. I really have to be back by the 15th. What kind of festival?

JAIME

For tomatoes. It's called a tomatina and it's a celebration of the tomato harvest, and it culminates in a gigantic food fight. Everybody dresses in white. Then at noon, they all throw them at each other.

Edith is fascinated.

EDITH

Does anybody get hurt?

JAIME

We wear goggles.

EDITH

It seems like a waste of food.

JAIME

Not really. The best tomatoes are picked early. The ones for salads. These, these are the leftovers.

(American accent)

Tomatoes. This is how you say it?

Edith laughs.

EDITH

Yes, but British people say it differently. I like the Italian *pomodoro*.

JAIME

The name in the Latin is *lycopersicum*, which means, how do you say, "wolf peach." It was thought to be attractive to werewolves.

EDITH

Because it is a deadly nightshade.

JAIME

Yes. It is silly. The tomato is essentially an ovary. Like a woman.

EDITH

But the tomato contains its own seeds.

JAIME

It has a feminine purpose, to make more life. And if it does not fulfill that purpose, then it is used for celebration.

Edith's eyes sparkle.

JAIME (CONT'D)

And maybe, in the middle of the celebrations, a few seeds, they will be planted.

EDITH
That's beautiful.

JAIME
I would really like to kiss you
right now.

EDITH
What?

JAIME
Would you like me to kiss you?

EDITH
Uh, no. But it has been wonderful
meeting you, Jaime.

She offers a handshake, which Jaime accepts, confused.

JAIME
Are you sure?

Edith is already walking away.

EDITH
I am, but thank you. This has been
a perfect evening.

JAIME
It's ten-thirty!

EXT. SPANISH STREET - NIGHT

Edith is walking home, drunk, and ranting to herself.

EDITH
Sure, it's ten-thirty in Spain, but
that's only four-thirty where I
live.
(shakes her head: lame)
I know it's ten-thirty. I've been
drinking since two! I was doing
shots while you were all taking
your siesta. Don't I deserve a
siesta? If I stay out too late, I
won't get any writing done.

INT. SPANISH HALLWAY - NIGHT

Edith ascends the stairs and prepares to walk down the hall.
She sees that the light is on under Tyler's door, she untucks
her shirt and musses up her hair.

She does her best loud shame walk down the hallway, expecting the door to open at any time. It doesn't.

INT. EDITH'S SPANISH ROOM - NIGHT

Edith is in bed, polishing off a bottle of wine and writing in her notebook.

EDITH

(v.o.)

That night, Joaquin took me
flamenco dancing. The music was
magical. He smelled wonderful, then
afterwards, we went out to the
veranda...

Edith puts her pen down.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Why didn't I kiss him?

She knocks her head against the headboard behind her, an act of subtle flagellation.

She takes another sip of wine and regrets some more.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Why?

She bangs her head again.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Why?

Again.

INT. TYLER'S ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Tyler and Caitlin pass a joint, listening to the banging coming from Edith's room. It sounds like she's having a pretty good time on her side. They share a knowing look.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

Edith is checking out of her lodging.

EDITH

May I leave my luggage here? I'll
be back in an hour.

The old woman behind the desk nods: sure.

EXT. PUBLIC SQUARE - MORNING

Edith sits at the same table she and Jaime shared.

She is addressing a series of postcards and envelopes to herself in Louisiana. She is writing with her opposite hand.

A waiter arrives.

EDITH

Una cerveza, y una sangria?

A beer and a sangria show up. She takes a sip of the beer, not enjoying it, then places the wet glass on her envelope. It leaves a ring, smearing the address. She smiles: perfect.

She continues to address the envelopes.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Edith hands the packet of mail to the old woman.

EDITH

Would you send this mail for me?

LANDLADY

Of course.

EDITH

Now, there's a trick to it. Each envelope has a date on it, which is when you should send it.

LANDLADY

I see I see.

A BLACK SCREEN.

The eyes adjust until it is clear we are inside...

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY

A dark hallway. A key in the lock, and Edith opens the door, allowing in a shaft of daylight. Jetlagged and half asleep, she moves into the house until...

EDITH

Oh my god!

Edith freaks out for a second, scared by the bobblehead shadow against the wall. She sits and catches her breath.

EXT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith, in sunglasses, parks carefully and walks toward her clinic nervously, looking around for witnesses.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith, in a hospital gown, leans back and fits her feet into a set of stirrups. She clears her mind and closes her eyes.

FADE TO WHITE.

MUSIC: Minnie Riperton, "Les Fleur"

A WHITE WALL

We are back in Spain.

A figure in white inches into the screen clutching the wall. It is Edith, looking nervous.

She hugs the wall, nervous about the threat she is facing:

A close-up of a ripe tomato, slowly revolving in the air...

...tossed up and down by a teenager, also dressed in white...

...one of a crowd in white, armed with buckets of tomatoes.

Edith's frightened reaction.

The teenager begins a wind up. He wants to be the first to hit Edith, but he is stopped by an elder, who points up at...

...the town clock: ten seconds to noon.

The elder's expression: not yet.

Edith looks up at the clock, then around: what to do?

Her perspective is a crowd of hundreds of townspeople in white, holding ripe tomatoes.

The clock strikes noon.

The crowd starts throwing.

Edith flinches.

Tomatoes slowly zooming through the air.

Jaime, Edith's handsome stranger, swoops in.

The tomatoes splatter against his back as he shields Edith.

They run from the crowd.

They make it make to Edith's room.

They tear each other's tomato-stained whites off.

They make passionate love on the bed, as the tomato fight rages outside their window.

CUT TO:

AS THE MUSIC REACHES crescendo, we cut to footage of an insemination. Seas of sperm swoosh into ovaries. The miracle of life at its very beginning.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith opens her eyes. This is happening.

FADE TO BLACK.

TEN WEEKS LATER

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Edith is listening to a student with many facial piercings in her graduate fiction workshop read out loud.

FACIAL PIERCING STUDENT

Edward slowly removes the young man's shirt, and slowly rubs his hands over his glistening young torso. He covers the supple flesh with wet kisses before kneeling and moving south. He unzips, and his last word comes..."Jacob."

Edith tries to keep a straight face at what is revealed to be "Twilight" fan fiction. A fist over her mouth stifles a laugh into a cough, which becomes a faux coughing fit.

But then a cough is different, and Edith's face conveys desperation. She rises.

EDITH

Sorry. I have to- I'll be right back.

Edith rises and swiftly moves out of class...

INT. HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

...into the hallway. She sprints to the ladies' room. As the door shuts behind her, obscuring our view, VOMITING is heard.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith sits in Dr. Timothy's office.

DR. TIMOTHY

Congratulations. You're pregnant.

EDITH

How pregnant?

DR. TIMOTHY

Eight weeks. Your fetus looks very healthy.

EDITH

Is it a girl?

DR. TIMOTHY

We won't know for a little longer, but I don't see anything.

EDITH

You mean a...?

DR. TIMOTHY

Penis, yes. If the angle of the sonogram is right, you can see it.
(amused by a memory)
Sometimes they even get erections.
Big ones, too. One time...

Dr. Timothy catches Edith's reaction and settles down. She doesn't want to hear about fetal erections.

EDITH

So what happens now?

DR. TIMOTHY

Well, we'll put you in touch with a hospital. Do you have a partner?
(MORE)

DR. TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Not necessarily a romantic partner,
but someone who will go through
this process with you?

EDITH

No, no. I'm still a solo act.

DR. TIMOTHY

That's fine. Let me get some
literature for you.

Dr. Timothy starts shuffling around his messy desk.

EDITH

When can I tell other people?

DR. TIMOTHY

We usually recommend waiting until
the twelve week point.

EDITH

So, four weeks from now?

DR. TIMOTHY

Sure. It's very exciting, isn't it?

Edith smiles.

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY

Music over:

Edith redecorates her home office into a baby's room.

She drags old furniture out of the room.

She measures the walls and makes marks.

With some difficulty she successfully hangs wallpaper.

The wallpaper is pink, and has little tomatoes on it.

She builds a cradle and places it artfully in the corner.

As a finishing touch, there is a blank rectangle on the wall
over the cradle.

By hand, she paints the baby's name in calligraphy: ROSA.

She smiles at her handiwork.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Edith walks down the hallway toward her office, passing the open door of Marcus, whose office is next to hers.

MARCUS

Edith?

She stops at his doorway.

EDITH

Hi.

MARCUS

I feel like we haven't talked all semester. How was your summer?

EDITH

Good, good. Yours?

MARCUS

Oh fine. Just stayed in the a.c. The whole time. You probably had more fun in Spain.

EDITH

(what's your point)
I probably did.

MARCUS

Uh, so, I was wondering. I've been thinking a lot about our dinner. I regret some of the things I said, and I was wondering if you'd like to go out with me again sometime.
(off her reaction)
On a date.

EDITH

I'm sorry, Marcus. I'm seeing someone.

MARCUS

You are? I had no idea. I just haven't seen you with anyone.

EDITH

He lives in Spain. We're quite serious.

Marcus, crestfallen, has a hard time accepting this as fact.

MARCUS

(feeble attempt)

Is it because I'm Black?

Edith walks away, not dignifying Marcus's joke.

EDITH

(ranting to herself)

It's because you had your chance.

If I dated you now I'd deserve what happened to me. What was I

thinking? It's because you're an oaf!

(trying words out)

A dolt! Troglodyte! Ninnyhammer!

Jobbernowl!

Students see her muttering as she walks by: what is her deal?

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Edith and Mabel are having lunch in their usual place. A waiter is taking their drink orders.

MABEL

I'll have a Bloody Mary.

EDITH

Iced tea for me.

MABEL

What's the matter? Are you on some kind of health kick?

EDITH

It's a cleanse. So, how did the writing go this summer?

MABEL

Pretty good. I'll have a draft for you soon. How about you? What did you end up writing this summer?

EDITH

Um, I did a lot of outlining. But nothing worth talking about.

MABEL

Oh, I see. What's his name?

EDITH

(ready to dish)

Joaquin. Estragon.

MABEL

Spaniard?

She nods.

MABEL (CONT'D)

Take it from the top. How did you meet?

EDITH

Well, there is a town in Valencia called Buñol, where they have a Tomatina, which is a tomato fight.

MABEL

I've heard about this.

EDITH

Joaquin saved my life. I was about to get caught in a crossfire between the Montagues and the Capulets. And he took a bullet for me. He took a tomato for me. Later, I went to see his family's farm.

MABEL

You know my next question. What kind of tomatoes do they grow?

EDITH

He lives in Northern Aragon, where they grow a pink tomato called Rosa de Barbastro.

MABEL

Wow, pink tomatoes. Are they good?

EDITH

They are amazing.

MABEL

How's his English?

EDITH

Not great.

MABEL

Neither is your Spanish.

EDITH

He's very intelligent, but he's kind of shy in conversation. We didn't talk that much.

MABEL

I bet. What's his favorite book?

EDITH

Middlemarch.

MABEL

You love *Middlemarch*. Do you have a photo?

EDITH

I do.

Edith produces her photo of Jaime.

MABEL

Now, that's a good looking man. But not much English?

EDITH

Not that bad. His letters are well written.

Edith pulls out one of the Spanish envelopes she arranged to mail to herself.

MABEL

Letters? They don't have e-mail in Spain, I suppose.

EDITH

Oh, Mabel. You know darn well that romance is better on paper.

Edith reads her letter aloud.

EDITH (CONT'D)

"My dear Wolf Peach, there was a great harvest this year..."

MABEL

Wolf Peach?

EDITH

It's a nickname for tomatoes. Isn't that priceless?

MABEL

You bet. You know you could Skype?

EDITH

What, talk through the Internet? No, I hate that.

MABEL

Don't you miss him?

EDITH

Of course I miss him. I just want to take my time with this one.

MABEL

When is he coming to visit?

EDITH

I don't know about that. His job is really demanding. It would be nice to see him again, but if not, we'll always have Madrid.

MABEL

If you want to see him again, you have to see each other again in the next few months.

EDITH

We're going to do our best.

Their drinks arrive. They toast, Bloody Mary to iced tea.

MABEL

Honey, you better hold onto that man for dear life.

They drink.

MABEL (CONT'D)

(joking)

You're probably pregnant.

Edith says nothing. Mabel finishes her sip, looks at Edith and knows.

MABEL (CONT'D)

You've got to be kidding me.

EDITH

I'm not supposed to tell anyone. Keep it a secret.

MABEL

"It's a cleanse"!

EDITH

Sorry.

MABEL

Did you get pregnant on purpose?

EDITH

No, but it just seemed right.

Mabel looks down at the photo.

MABEL

That is going to be one handsome baby.

EDITH

I think we're going to name her Rosa, after the pink tomatoes.

MABEL

It's a girl?

EDITH

Probably.

MABEL

To Rosa.

(correcting herself)

That is going to be one gorgeous baby.

They clink glasses again.

INT. EDITH'S KITCHEN - DAY

Edith is on a cordless phone, talking to her mother, Nancy.

EDITH

So, Mom, I've been meaning to ask you. Do you know that hand-carved chest that I used to have when I was little?

NANCY

(o.s.)

The one that was in Lisa's and your room? Sure.

EDITH

What are you going to do with that when you move?

NANCY

I'm planning to give it to Lisa.

EDITH

Lisa? Why?

NANCY

Well, she and Bill are planning to have kids, and I thought it would be nice for it to be in a little girl's room again.

EDITH

In that case, you might want to rethink that. I have a good room for it here.

NANCY

How do you figure?

EDITH

Well, it looks like there's going to be a little girl in my house.

NANCY

What, are you taking in boarders?

EDITH

I'm going to be a mother.

NANCY

Oh my god. You did it. You adopted a baby.

EDITH

What? No, Mom.

MOM

When does he show up?

EDITH

I'm not adopting. I'm pregnant.

MOM

What? How?

EDITH

What do you think? The normal way.

MOM

You aren't married. You aren't even seeing anybody.

EDITH

Mom, I am. Sort of. His name is Joaquin, we met in Spain.

MOM

What's his last name?

EDITH

Estragon. Aren't you excited about the baby? I think it's going to be a girl!

MOM

I am excited, but we won't be meeting her for another seven months. When do we meet the guy?

EDITH

Well, there are no plans for him to visit. He's very busy.

MOM

Are you going to get married?

EDITH

No! I mean, we're going to wait until after.

MOM

That's very contemporary.

A beep comes through Edith's connection.

EDITH

Mom, that's my other line. Be right back.

Edith clicks over.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Hello?

DR. TIMOTHY

Edith Barraclough? This is Dr. Timothy, from the Fertility clinic? How are you?

EDITH

I'm fine. How are you? Is everything okay?

DR. TIMOTHY

Yes, everything's fine...with me.

EDITH

Uh, is everything fine with me?

DR. TIMOTHY

Everything's fine with you, you're perfectly healthy.

Edith exhales, relieved.

EDITH
That's good to hear.

DR. TIMOTHY
But your baby.

EDITH
What's wrong with my baby? What's
wrong with her?

DR. TIMOTHY
I think you better come in.

EDITH
I'll be right over.

Edith hangs up and grabs her purse. As she moves to the door,
the phone starts ringing again: she left her mother hanging.

She ignores the phone and leaves.

EXT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY

Edith sees a crowd of protesters outside the front door of
the clinic again, so she drives around back.

She parks (poorly), gets out and enters via the back door.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Timothy is reading a prepared statement to Edith.

DR. TIMOTHY
"Ms. Barraclough, you signed a
release before your insemination
procedure acknowledging the risks
involved, that there would be no
guarantee of a pregnancy, or that
you would not experience a
miscarriage. In your case, while a
healthy pregnancy has been the
result, we must admit that there
has been a discrepancy with your
procedure."

EDITH
Is my daughter going to be healthy?

DR. TIMOTHY

Actually, we can now see that your child will be a son.

EDITH

Oh. Oh. Well, we were prepared for that, right?

DR. TIMOTHY

Yes.

EDITH

And he's healthy? What is the discrepancy?

DR. TIMOTHY

(how do I say this?)

The discrepancy is with your specimen.

EDITH

I don't understand.

DR. TIMOTHY

You have been inseminated with a specimen from a different donor.

EDITH

Oh. Oh. But a healthy specimen?

DR. TIMOTHY

Yes, all the donors are screened for disease, and are of a high genetic caliber.

EDITH

But the donor is not who I ordered.

DR. TIMOTHY

No.

EDITH

Is he ambidextrous?

DR. TIMOTHY

No.

EDITH

Is he Spanish?

DR. TIMOTHY

No.

EDITH

Was he born in 1966?

DR. TIMOTHY

No.

EDITH

'78?

DR. TIMOTHY

No.

EDITH

Is he bigger than a breadbox? My
god, what year was he born?

Dr. Timothy checks the paperwork.

DR. TIMOTHY

1992.

EDITH

Year of the Monkey? What's his IQ?

DR. TIMOTHY

He's very intelligent. Pursuing a
BS in chemistry. Graduated high
school summa cum laude.

Edith is trying her best to process all this.

EDITH

Not too bad. Can he dance?

DR. TIMOTHY

That is unclear at this time.

EDITH

What am I forgetting to ask?

DR. TIMOTHY

He's Black.

EDITH

Oh. Oh. So he's definitely not from
Spain.

DR. TIMOTHY

No, he's from here.

EDITH

Oh, my god. Did you get anything
right?

DR. TIMOTHY

Well, you're still on track to have a Taurus.

EDITH

What's his name?

DR. TIMOTHY

Well, we still can't tell you his name. But there are some other things I can share.

Dr. Timothy hands Edith a manila folder, which Edith accepts. She fans the folder back and forth, its bendiness betraying its lack of heft.

DR. TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. We guaranteed his privacy.

EDITH

Guaranteed.

DR. TIMOTHY

Yours is too. Nobody ever has to know this occurred.

EDITH

What happened? How and why does something like this happen?

DR. TIMOTHY

It was a labeling mistake. We had a faulty labeler.

EDITH

A labeler? Is that a machine?

DR. TIMOTHY

No, it's a person, a medical technician.

EDITH

A person. What was his excuse?

DR. TIMOTHY

He had food poisoning. He had eaten a bad Reuben.

EDITH

A Reuben sandwich?

DR. TIMOTHY

Yes. He should have gone home. We are very sorry.

Dr. Timothy goes back to the paper on his desk: the legalese.

DR. TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

It was of paramount importance that you understand your current biological state. You should take some time to decide what you would like to do next.

EDITH

What do you mean? Can I get a do-over?

DR. TIMOTHY

While I am not empowered to negotiate on behalf of our clinic at this time, if you are interested in another procedure with your intended donor, I'm sure this can be arranged.

EDITH

When? I mean, how soon can we redo?

DR. TIMOTHY

There is the matter of your current pregnancy, which you will either take to term or terminate.

EDITH

Terminate?

DR. TIMOTHY

If you have any other questions, don't hesitate to call.

Edith, dazed, gets up and heads to the door. Her final words:

EDITH

If I have any other questions?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Edith walks down the hall, talking to herself. She passes several LARGE FRAMED PHOTOS OF HAPPY FAMILIES. None of them are multi-racial.

EDITH

Do I have any other questions?
Sure? Like, what can you do to a
bad labeler? Can you put something
he doesn't want inside of him? Can
I label him? God, I should have
known this would happen when I saw
your desk! If you can't put your
pens in your pen cup, why should I
let you put anything in my uterus!

She stops at a photo of a beautiful Black child. She
contemplates it: is this what her baby will look like now?

Edith absentmindedly moves to the front door, opening it...

EXT. FERTILITY CLINIC - DAY - CONTINUOUS

...into a small crowd of PRO-LIFERS she has been avoiding.
They are picketing and praying behind a police cordon. They
scream at Edith as she passes.

Having passed the cordon, Edith gets an idea then turns back
around. She takes a flyer from one and looks at it. It reads:
THE WORST OFFENDERS. It's a list of local abortion clinics
and addresses. Edith pockets the list and moves around the
corner to her car.

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - BABY'S ROOM - DAY

Edith, sitting on the floor of her pink former office,
reluctantly opens the folder and reads the essay.

MALE VOICE

There is a dual desire in the heart
of every mature male adult. To hunt
and gather, and to plant his seed.
I knew that I wanted to plant my
seed, but I wasn't ready to stop
hunting or gathering. I have no
plans to get married or start a
family.

EDITH

You would, you're a Gemini.

MALE VOICE

Not until I've achieved some of my
larger goals. Finishing a doctorate
in applied sciences, getting a job
at a major corporation, while
inventing on the side.

(MORE)

MALE VOICE (CONT'D)

Someday, I'll come up with the thing that will let me retire. Hopefully by thirty. Then I may devote myself to law, or perhaps politics.

Edith, feeling a rush of nausea, drops the essay, and looks around room desperately. She finally locates a PONYTAIL HOLDER and rushes to the bathroom, where she can be heard vomiting loudly.

A faucet runs, and Edith groans, then gargles. She re-enters and picks up the packet again. Not bearing to read the essay, she lifts the wallet-sized photograph.

The photo is of her specimen donor at five, a cute African American boy with missing teeth, smiling broadly.

Edith's look speaks volumes: this isn't Joaquin.

INT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

A crowded shopping mall. Edith emerges from a photo booth, which promises to combine two photos. The machine has a sign which reads WHAT WOULD YOUR CHILD LOOK LIKE?

Edith waits for her photo to spit out. When it arrives, she looks at the messed up combo of a five-year-old African American boy with missing teeth and a forty-year-old white professor.

She looks at the photo in disbelief.

EDITH

(v.o.)

A stranger's child is growing inside me.

INT. PRIVATE DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Edith is sitting in a private detective's office, wearing a wig. The detective is reading his findings to her.

DETECTIVE

This one was pretty easy. Place of birth, high school, college, race, Facebook. His name is Kelvin Robertson. He went to Forest Lawn Academy, then Loyola, then Mercer.

EDITH

How long did he take?

DETECTIVE

Again?

EDITH

To graduate. When did he graduate?

DETECTIVE

Didn't graduate.

EDITH

Undergrad? What about grad school?

DETECTIVE

No record.

EDITH

Wow.

DETECTIVE

Arrest record, charge expunged. I have an address. Works at a karaoke bar called the Brass Monkey. The rest is in here.

EDITH

Thank you. I'm sure I'll be able to take it from here.

He hands the folder over to her.

DETECTIVE

I take Visa, Mastercard, AmEx and personal checks, with a state issued ID.

EDITH

Would you accept cash?

DETECTIVE

Who hates cash?

INT. THE BRASS MONKEY - NIGHT

This garishly lit karaoke joint is the first bar Edith has been in since becoming pregnant. She wanders up to the bar and attracts the attention of a handsome African American BARTENDER (mid 20s).

BARTENDER

Hey, how are you doing?

EDITH

Good, you?

BARTENDER

Blessed. Can I get you a beer?

She sizes him up. Not bad.

EDITH

(I will keep this baby)

Hmmm...probably not. Mineral water.

He gets her drink.

EDITH (CONT'D)

So...come here often?

BARTENDER

Ha ha. What's a girl like you doing
in a place like this?

EDITH

Touche. The usual.

BARTENDER

Okay, what's your number?

EDITH

What?

BARTENDER

What song are you here to sing?

EDITH

Oh, I was just kidding. I don't
sing. I just heard the...drinks
were good here.

Edith gives up on her line halfway through.

BARTENDER

Uh, okay.

(to his side)

Kelvin, I'm taking my ten!

And with that, this bartender exits, and Edith looks down the
bar, confused. She thought this guy was Kelvin. But, no.

Down the bar is a small, chanting crowd. Edith looks closer,
to see that a duel is going on. A hefty FRATBOY (20) is
wolfing down a tray of hot peppers, as people cheer around
him. He finishes, but looks a little green. Next, it is the
bartender's turn.

This skinny African American guy (21) wears an ironic T-shirt that reads EPIC FAIL, skinny jeans, and a tall, ridged Afro fauxhawk. He has a prominent neck tattoo, among other markings. This is KELVIN, and it's his turn.

Kelvin gobbles up a line of peppers without blinking, to the amazement of all. He finishes by filling a shot glass with Tabasco and shooting it. This is over.

Not yet, signals the fratboy. He takes the Tabasco bottle and pours a shot of his own. He shoots it, smiles confidently and then vomits.

Laughter, jeers, victory. Kelvin raises both fists.

Edith looks at him in shock: this is Kelvin?

Kelvin collects money for his bar bet and walks down the bar toward Edith. He notices her staring at him.

KELVIN

Why are you looking at my hair?

EDITH

I think I was trying not to stare at your neck.

KELVIN

You don't like my ink?

EDITH

What is it?

KELVIN

You have to look closer and check it out.

She leans over the bar to look.

EDITH

That looks like Princess Leia...

KELVIN

Uh huh.

EDITH

And she's sitting on R2D2. But why?

KELVIN

(disappointed)

She's using him for a vibrator.

Edith sees that yes, Leia is using R2D2 for a vibrator.

EDITH

(disgusted)

Is that why you got a tattoo on your neck, to make women come over to you?

KELVIN

(stating the obvious)

I also like Star Wars.

EDITH

You don't worry that...*that* would keep you from getting a job?

KELVIN

What kind of job?

EDITH

Like at a law firm, or maybe political office?

KELVIN

Well, another reason to get a neck tattoo is to remind yourself never to get stuck in some dipshit job in the first place.

EDITH

Lawyers are dipshits?

KELVIN

You ask a lot of questions, counsellor. Are you, by chance, a dipshit?

EDITH

How could you tell, my neck?

KELVIN

Hey, can I buy you a drink? I just won a hundred bucks.

EDITH

Yeah, give me a Scotch.

KELVIN

I could make you something much more interesting. I have an associate's degree in mixology. How do you feel about rosehip tincture?

EDITH

Interesting is overrated.

Kelvin nods (suit yourself) and pours her a tall Scotch.

EDITH (CONT'D)

How long have you been a bartender?

KELVIN

I'm not just a bartender. That doesn't define me.

EDITH

Oh, you're "one who tends bar."

KELVIN

Well, I'm still barbacking, but it's one of my many gigs.

EDITH

What else rounds out the CV?

KELVIN

Scooter mechanic, notary public, mail order minister, Linux programmer, hot pepper eater, life coach?

EDITH

Life coach?

KELVIN

I know, that sounds bad. How about "happiness consultant"?

EDITH

How about "student"?

KELVIN

Not any more, no. I learned enough.

EDITH

So no career path?

KELVIN

God, no. Might as well wear a tie.

EDITH

What, and blindfold Princess Leia?

KELVIN

What do you do?

EDITH

I'm a college professor.

KELVIN

No wonder you're so bitter. What's your favorite band?

EDITH

Wow. Now put me in a box. Uh, I don't know, Joni Mitchell?

KELVIN

Who?

EDITH

(aghast)

Do you suppose I could buy back my introduction to you?

KELVIN

What?

EDITH

Nothing. Groucho Marx. How about Minnie Riperton? Heard of her?

KELVIN

(I know that name)

Sort of.

EDITH

I presume you have a favorite band, or should I just check the other side of your neck?

KELVIN

TV on the Radio, who you've probably never heard of.

EDITH

TV on the Radio? That doesn't sound like a band. So it probably is one.

KELVIN

I bet you're one of those people who doesn't own a television.

EDITH

(she is)

Quit reading my mail.

KELVIN

What's mail?

A hot girl walks up to the bar. This is MADISON (21).

MADISON

Where the fuck have you been?

KELVIN

Right here! I'm sorry. Is it time?

MADISON

It's *been* time! Don't keep me waiting.

KELVIN

Are you getting up with me?

MADISON

After I've been hanging out by the stage for ten minutes? Fuck you.

KELVIN

But I need you! Please? Just stand in front, let me serenade you.

Madison flips Kelvin off and walks away.

EDITH

Is that your girlfriend?

KELVIN

Not yet. Nice talking to you, ma'am.

Kelvin moves from behind the bar and runs up to the karaoke stage. The backing track starts, and Kelvin starts rapping to Madison, who stands nearby with her arms crossed. The song is the nasty "Wait (the Whisper Song)" by the Ying Yang Twins.

KELVIN (CONT'D)

Hey how ya doing lil momma let me
whisper in ya ear, Tell ya
something that ya might like to
hear, Got a sexy ass body and yo
ass look soft. Mind if I touch it
and see if it's soft? Naw I'm just
playin less you say I can and I'm
known to be a real nasty man. I
hear they say a closed mouth don't
give in, and I don't mind askin for
head...

Edith looks at her Scotch, untouched. Should she take a sip?

EDITH

(to herself)

Ma'am?

Back at the stage, Kelvin continues.

KELVIN

Hey bitch, wait 'til you see my
dick, wait 'til you see my dick,
hey bitch. Wait 'til you see my
dick I'm gon beat that pussy up...

CUT TO:

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY

Edith is walking from room to room on the phone.

EDITH

Hi, is this Planned Parenthood? No,
I don't want to make an appointment
yet. I just want to talk to
somebody about...I guess I do want
to make an appointment.

The mail falls through the mail slot. Edith retrieves it.

EDITH (CONT'D)

How long does it take to get there?
And what's the address? Do you guys
have parking? Is it inside, or
private? Is anybody protesting?
Could you look outside and see if
anyone is out there right now?

Flipping through the mail, she notices a letter from Spain,
and the return address reads Joaquin Estragon.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Yes, Tuesday works.

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY - LATER

Edith has opened the letter, and reads it to herself.

JAIME

(v.o.)

My dearest Wolf Peach, how I miss
your face. I know our child is no
bigger than an olive, but somehow I
know our baby will be a beautiful
girl. I think you should name her
Rosa, so that you will always
remember the soil where our love
bore fruit.

Edith smirks. Even she knows she laid it on a little thick.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Edith is walking out of her classroom.

MARCUS

Edith?

Edith turns to see Marcus.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Haven't seen you around much this week.

EDITH

I've been working from home.

MARCUS

You've been sick, I heard.

EDITH

(awkward)

Yeah.

MARCUS

Congratulations are in order.

EDITH

Oh, you heard?

MARCUS

Yeah, is it public?

EDITH

Yeah, I suppose so.

MARCUS

I know there can be complications when the mother is...

He means older. She bristles.

EDITH

Well, there aren't. Everything is just fine.

MARCUS

It's just, I know you are somewhere else with your life, but I'd still like to take you to lunch sometime. I miss talking to you.

EDITH

Marcus, I'm sorry. I'm just going through a lot right now.

She walks away.

MARCUS

(calling after)

Is it because I need to lose a few pounds?

INT. MABEL'S OFFICE - DAY

We enter the scene as Edith confronts Mabel, who is sitting in her crowded professor's office.

EDITH

I asked you not to tell anybody. And you told Marcus?

MABEL

What can I say? I like the guy. He needed to hear it.

EDITH

I'm in a relationship.

MABEL

Yes, I know. But I don't like Joaquin for you.

EDITH

Be nice. That's the father of my child.

MABEL

So when's he going to visit?

EDITH

He's coming in a few months. He's going to be here for the birth.

MABEL

He better. And I hope he stays.

EDITH

(lying)

He probably will.

MABEL

Promise? Don't move to Madrid.

EDITH
I won't. Promise.

INT. RECORD STORE - DAY

Edith purchases a CD by TV on the Radio, an African-American rock band.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Edith, wearing headphones, listens to TV on the Radio as she rakes the overgrown vines in her patch of the community garden. It looked bad at the beginning of the summer. Four more months of nothing have left it a tangled mess.

Edith puts her shoulder into it. She is starting over.

The music continues over...

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE UP on Edith sitting on the floor eating a salad.

PULL BACK to reveal that she is in her partially wallpapered nursery room, decorated with cute little pink tomato vines.

She stops eating her salad when she notices what is at the end of her fork: an olive. Sigh.

She looks around. This will never be her son's wallpaper.

Edith takes off her headphones and takes out her cellphone.

EDITH
Hi, Planned Parenthood. I made an appointment, for a major procedure, I mean, the usual thing you do. And I'd like to postpone the procedure, and I'd like to know how long I can postpone it, if necessary.
(beat)
So, no later than January?

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

Kelvin is up on stage, working the microphone, berating the crowd to get on stage and sing. He has a bandage on his collarbone under his t-shirt.

He leaves the stage and heads to the bar. He sees Edith.

KELVIN

Hey, I remember you.

EDITH

I'm sure I stick out in this crowd.

KELVIN

I never forget a milf.

EDITH

Is that a compliment?

KELVIN

It isn't not a compliment.

Edith bites her tongue. Kelvin moves behind the bar.

KELVIN (CONT'D)

What can I get you?

EDITH

Just a club soda.

KELVIN

Club soda? I didn't take you for a singer.

EDITH

I'm not.

KELVIN

Well, there are two kinds of karaoke singers. The ones who do it to indulge their love of singing, and the kind we get here, who like to sing when they're shitfaced. You aren't here to drink or to sing, so there's only one more possibility. You're here to get laid.

EDITH

Oh, my god. You definitely don't have a girlfriend.

KELVIN

Okay, you're right. But not for lack of trying.

EDITH

What happened with that girl from that last time I was here?

KELVIN

Who, Madison? She's not talking to me right now, but I'll get that.

EDITH

Kelvin, can I tell you something?

KELVIN

How did you know my name was Kelvin?

EDITH

(thinking fast)

I heard it last week.

(her wisdom)

Some men choose the womb, and other men choose the whip.

KELVIN

What does that mean?

EDITH

That you may be confusing the pursuit of emotion with the real thing.

KELVIN

That's me. Infatuation junkie. Is that so wrong?

EDITH

Not really. It just helps to know which kind you are. Acquiring new emotions always provides a high. But eventually you may be interested in what happens when you build something with your emotions.

KELVIN

That's the womb?

EDITH

You don't have any friends who move in with their girlfriends immediately, where spending time and taking care of each other is job one?

KELVIN

Yes, but then they usually stop coming out to bars, and I never see them anymore.

EDITH

Do you mind if I ask you a question?

KELVIN

Eight inches.

EDITH

(ignoring his answer)

How long have you been working here?

KELVIN

A year.

EDITH

Why did you pick this job?

KELVIN

I have three jobs, and I do them all part time. It's easy to get off work if you're just a minor participant.

EDITH

You'd prefer it if no one had to rely on you.

KELVIN

I didn't say that.

EDITH

But you do have issues with commitment.

KELVIN

If I had commitment issues, would I have all these tattoos?

EDITH

Of course. Getting a tattoo takes some commitment, but keeping a tattoo doesn't. It's not like you have to draw it on every day.

KELVIN

(delighted)

But I do have one of those.

Kelvin pulls his T-shirt up to his shoulder, to reveal a clown head, with pointed collar, tattooed on his shoulder.

KELVIN (CONT'D)

See? I got it so you could draw a different clown body every time. He could be fat, or skinny, or have a dog body.

EDITH

How old were you when you came up with that?

KELVIN

That was just two months ago. The first one was here.

Kelvin pulls his shirt off to reveal an enormous word tattooed across his skinny chest in gothic letters: JETSAM.

EDITH

Okay.

KELVIN

Jetsam is the stuff that ends up floating on the sea after a shipwreck.

EDITH

Technically, that's flotsam. Jetsam is the stuff you throw overboard in order to avoid sinking. Is that how you see yourself?

KELVIN

(not feeling insulted)

I guess so. It's the name of one of my companies. Now, I shouldn't even do this.

He starts peeling the bandage off his collarbone.

EDITH

I don't need to see it.

He keeps peeling, revealing the letters CLA

KELVIN

But it's the new guy.

He reveals a fresh tattoo: CLAVICLE!!! When Edith doesn't laugh, Kelvin is confused.

EDITH

I don't understand.

KELVIN

The clavicle is the name of your collarbone.

EDITH

I know what a clavicle is! I just mean...why would you...?

(changing tack)

What is with all the exclamation points? Not just there. Why do people your age constantly overuse exclamation points?

KELVIN

People my age get excited? I probably need one just to get out of bed in the afternoon. Two means you're really getting your wow on. And three means like, "Holy fuck, I'm getting a painful tattoo on my clavicle!!!" Don't you ever get excited?

EDITH

I find it's better in the long run to keep an even keel. Don't freak out about victories or defeats. Just stay cool. Middle path.

KELVIN

You definitely don't have a boyfriend.

Edith almost disagrees, but doesn't. Kelvin is one person she isn't lying to about Joaquin.

INT. ADOPTION AGENCY - DAY

Edith is meeting with a kind-looking AGENT (40'S) at an adoption agency. There are photos of smiling children adorning the walls.

ADOPTION AGENT

Miss Barraclough, thank you so much for coming in.

EDITH

Thank you for meeting on such short notice.

ADOPTION AGENT

This initial interview consists of some basic questions, and in no way is to be considered a commitment on your part. We will find you a family that is interested in adopting your child. They will commit to supporting you financially throughout the rest of your pregnancy, the medical bills involved in the birth, and for a reasonable post-natal period.

EDITH

So, I can take leave from my job?

ADOPTION AGENT

Yes, usually that takes place. It depends on the contract with the adoptive family, but most candidates are able to help.

EDITH

But they aren't buying the baby.

ADOPTION AGENT

No, of course not. But any reasonable expenses can be considered part of the medical procedure, and are there to make you comfortable.

EDITH

How comfortable are we talking about?

ADOPTION AGENT

If you don't mind my saying so, you appear to be an outstanding candidate. In cases like yours, twenty to twenty-five thousand dollars is a reasonable amount to expect.

EDITH

Wow. I wasn't expecting that.

ADOPTION AGENT

If you're ready to begin? This interview should take about fifteen minutes.

EDITH

Okay, shoot.

ADOPTION AGENT
Name and date of birth?

EDITH
Edith Jane Barraclough. April
eleventh, 1971.

ADOPTION AGENT
Name of the father?

EDITH
We aren't together.

ADOPTION AGENT
Well, that may cause a consent
issue.

EDITH
Actually, I conceived in vitro
using a clinic.

ADOPTION AGENT
Oh. We don't hear that a lot. So
you don't know the donor's name?

EDITH
No. I know many things about him. I
brought the folder. But no, it's
anonymous.

ADOPTION AGENT
You've changed your mind about
keeping the child?

EDITH
Yes.

ADOPTION AGENT
Just so you know. When you enter
into a contract with a family, we
encourage the mother to be one
hundred percent committed to the
adoption process.

EDITH
I know.

ADOPTION AGENT
You may always back out. This has
been known to happen in the
hospital, and can be very difficult
for all involved.

EDITH

I'm pretty sure this was a bad idea for me. There is no way I can imagine being a mother in this situation.

ADOPTION AGENT

Understood. Race of the mother?

EDITH

European-American.

ADOPTION AGENT

We'll just say Caucasian. Race of the father?

EDITH

African-American.

The agent stops writing for a moment and immediately tries to conceal her surprise.

ADOPTION AGENT

(writing)

African...American.

Her look to Edith conveys a lot, but particularly sympathy.

EDITH

That doesn't have anything to do with it.

ADOPTION AGENT

Of course it doesn't.

EDITH

I'm not giving up the child because he is going to be biracial.

ADOPTION AGENT

Of course. But, I must inform you that the numbers work out a little differently.

EDITH

How so?

ADOPTION AGENT

The scale ends up...different. The numbers generally end up lower.

EDITH

Are you telling me that people
spend less money to adopt biracial
children?

The agent's expression says "do I have to say it?"

EDITH (CONT'D)

Why?

ADOPTION AGENT

That's just how it works. It may
take a little longer to find a
suitable set of parents, but I'm
sure we can find someone.

EDITH

Wait, what?

ADOPTION AGENT

There are just many more African-
American and biracial children out
there, and much fewer Caucasian
children. That's just the way
things work out.

EDITH

Are you talking supply and demand?
My baby won't be as popular?

ADOPTION AGENCY LADY

That's just the way things work
out.

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

The bar is packed. Lots of people drinking and dancing.

Edith tries to get Kelvin's attention. He sees her.

They have to raise their voices above the crowd.

KELVIN

More questions?

EDITH

Just a couple.

KELVIN

I can't do it now, we're too
slammed! Can you give me two hours?

EDITH

No! Don't you get a break?

KELVIN

It's ten-thirty! You at least have to tell me why.

EDITH

I'm a writer.

KELVIN

I thought you were a teacher.

EDITH

I teach creative writing, and I write short stories.

KELVIN

You don't think you should commit to one career path?

EDITH

(ignoring him)

Anyway, I'm writing something, and I'm here for research.

KELVIN

Are you writing about karaoke?

EDITH

Yes, sort of.

KELVIN

Well, I can tell you everything you need to know. But...

EDITH

What?

KELVIN

You have to sing one first.

EDITH

Nope.

KELVIN

From what I've heard, you should write what you know.

Edith is caught. This is the kind of thing she tells her students.

EDITH

You don't have any songs that I know.

KELVIN

Are you kidding? Modern karaoke technology gives you fifty thousand songs to choose from!

EDITH

Did you say fifty *thousand*?

KELVIN

You got it. Pick anything!

CUT TO:

INT. KARAOKE BAR - DAY

Edith sings Arlo Guthrie's "Alice's Restaurant," a meandering twenty-three minute song that has more talking than singing. Which is good, as Edith can't sing a lick.

EDITH

This song is called Alice's Restaurant, and it's about Alice, and the restaurant, but Alice's Restaurant is not the name of the restaurant, that's just the name of the song, and that's why I called the song Alice's Restaurant.

The crowd looks up. Who is this woman, and what is this crazy song?

EDITH (CONT'D)

(singing this part)

You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant

You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant

Walk right in it's around the back

Just a half a mile from the railroad track

You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant

Kelvin notices people starting to leave the bar, due to Edith's screeching.

EDITH (CONT'D)

(back to talking)

Now it all started two
Thanksgivings ago, was on - two
years ago on Thanksgiving, when my
friend and I went up to visit Alice
at the restaurant, but Alice
doesn't live in the restaurant, she
lives in the church nearby the
restaurant, in the bell-tower, with
her husband Ray and Fasha the dog.
And livin' in the bell tower like
that, they got a lot of room
downstairs where the pews used to
be in...

CUT TO:

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Now the bar is dead, and Kelvin is sitting down with Edith.
Her singing has cleared the room.

KELVIN

So what's your story about?

EDITH

I'd rather not say. Bad luck. Okay,
Kelvin. My big question: what do
you want?

KELVIN

What do you mean, like a car?

EDITH

You don't have a car?

KELVIN

I ride a bike. Is that a problem?

EDITH

No, I should have guessed. I mean,
what do you want out of life? How
do you see your future?

KELVIN

(thinking it through)

Well, I'll be single, and I'll have
a thriving Internet business that I
can do in a few hours a week.

EDITH

So you own a business.

KELVIN

I don't like it when you say it like that. Maybe I'm an inventor. I tinker around in my garage, which I rent, and invent things, which I sell for lots of money, which I live off of, and travel the world.

EDITH

So shouldn't you go back to school?

KELVIN

I learned what I wanted. I didn't want to have to take all those writing classes, humanities, all that crap.

EDITH

Crap, huh? You're already a good enough writer?

KELVIN

I just don't think it's that big a deal. I don't care for the structure. It's asphyxiating. And I don't think it's that important to have the initials after your name.

EDITH

But don't you plan to go back?

KELVIN

No, why? Should I?

EDITH

Yes, you should follow through on the things you start. And the older you get the harder it is to do things like college. And if you want to study engineering...

KELVIN

And why am I studying engineering?

EDITH

You want to invent things.

KELVIN

I could invent a new drink. Like, this is the French Quarter. All anybody every drank around here were Hurricanes, Hurricanes, Hurricanes.

(MORE)

KELVIN (CONT'D)

Then someone invented the Hand Grenade. I could invent the next Hand Grenade.

EDITH

And that would make you rich? A recipe? Could you study chemistry?

KELVIN

I'm working on a lot of projects.

EDITH

Like what?

KELVIN

I'm trying to figure out how to make a glue stick with mayonnaise.

EDITH

(pardon me)
Again?

KELVIN

It looks like a glue stick, but you just rub it on toast or something and it spreads the mayo. You don't need a knife.

EDITH

But they have plastic bottles that squirt.

KELVIN

But you still need the knife to spread it.

EDITH

Next?

KELVIN

What does this have to do with karaoke?

EDITH

I sang for you. You said I could ask you anything. What else are you working on?

KELVIN

A combination paper shredder hamster cage. You feed the documents in and the hamsters immediately put it to use.

EDITH

You think there's a big market for rodent-based office supplies?

KELVIN

I'm working on a brassiere that uses the weight of large breasts to create electrical energy in a power cell. The more they bounce, the more energy they create.

EDITH

I bet it would work really well on cheerleaders.

KELVIN

That's where I got the idea.

EDITH

What must your apartment look like?

KELVIN

You want to see it?

EDITH

Yes. Yes I do.

KELVIN

Then let's get out of here. How do you want to do this?

EDITH

What?

KELVIN

(suggesting his bike)

I can double you?

EDITH

I have a car.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Edith's Toyota pulls up in front of a darkened, dilapidated office building. Edith and Kelvin get out. She pops the trunk and he removes his bicycle and wheels it toward the building.

EDITH

Wait, you live here?

KELVIN

Yeah.

EDITH

Is is converted to residential?

KELVIN

Not exactly.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Edith and Kelvin are alone in the elevator. Kelvin is holding his bicycle by the handlebars vertically.

KELVIN

I figured it out a few years back.
There was a shortage of residential
units and a surplus of dilapidated
office buildings. So I just moved
in.

EDITH

How long have you lived here?

KELVIN

Two years.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The elevator doors open. Kelvin and Edith walk down the hall.

EDITH

Where do you go to the bathroom?

KELVIN

The men's room.
(pointing)
Right there?

EDITH

(incredulous)
But...where do you bathe?

KELVIN

The gym? Three blocks away. Keeps
me fit.

They get to his door, which reads JETSAM ENTERPRISES.

EDITH

And the building managers have
never suspected anything?

Kelvin unlocks the door and opens it narrowly.

KELVIN

I have a cat.

INT. KELVIN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

It looks like the lair of a hoarder with multiple personality disorder. Broken equipment, half-finished projects.

KELVIN

It's the maid's day off. Can I make you a cocktail? Non-toxic, of course.

EDITH

Sure.

Kelvin moves to the kitchen area: a tabletop with hot plate, kettle, etc.. A pony fridge sits on the floor.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Can you actually cook in there, or do you eat at the gym?

KELVIN

I probably shouldn't tell you this, but I made dinner for Madison the other night.

EDITH

Of course you can tell me that. So things are going well?

KELVIN

She tagged me out at third base, but I'm getting there.

EDITH

You probably shouldn't tell me that.

He arrives with her "cocktail."

KELVIN

Here you go. It's a Shirley Temple with tomato juice.

EDITH

What do you call it, a Bloody Temple?

KELVIN

Oh, that's good. I've been calling it a Carrie White.

EDITH
Like Stephen King's Carrie?

She sips and grimaces.

KELVIN
Too tangy? It's supposed to feel
like when a teenaged girl gets her
first Shark Week.

Edith stares. Did he really just say that?

KELVIN (CONT'D)
So, let's get down to business.

Kelvin makes himself comfortable on the old couch he and
Edith are sharing.

KELVIN (CONT'D)
You aren't writing an article about
karaoke.

EDITH
Guilty.

KELVIN
You like younger guys?

EDITH
What? No. I'm writing a short story
about a guy like you.

Kelvin's look suggests he thought she was here for a hook-up.

KELVIN
What is a guy like me?

EDITH
Young with a future full of
possibilities, trying to figure out
which path to choose.

KELVIN
And you would come back to my
apartment just to get the story?

EDITH
Sure. Now, what's the longest time
you've ever been with a woman?

KELVIN
(thinking)
Probably about seven hours, but we
took breaks.

EDITH

I'm talking about a relationship.

KELVIN

I guess I knew that. Six months?

EDITH

What's the shortest?

KELVIN

(you don't want to know)
Pretty short.

EDITH

Who ends them?

KELVIN

The girl, usually.

EDITH

You say you've had a lot of jobs.
What's the longest time you've ever
kept one job?

KELVIN

Probably this one?

EDITH

What's the shortest you've ever
held a job?

KELVIN

I mean, I've quit internships in
like half an hour. Best to nip that
shit in the bud.

EDITH

Have you ever lied to get a job?

KELVIN

Probably.

EDITH

Like when?

KELVIN

You know, made up references, said
I had skills I didn't have, made my
address look residential.

EDITH

Can you think of anything specific?

We know what she's asking about.

KELVIN

No, not at this time.

EDITH

Have you ever been arrested?

KELVIN

Yes. Trespassing. In a church. With my friends. And playing paintball.

EDITH

What's the strangest job you've ever had? Where you were like "What a way to make a living?"

KELVIN

I braided a dude's beard. Fifty bucks. Dragon breath. Got that one on Craigslist.

EDITH

Did you ever have a job that pushed the limits, where you thought, "this is getting personal?"

KELVIN

Don't know. I wouldn't do porn, I don't think.

EDITH

Good, good.

KELVIN

The wage disparity is off the chart.

EDITH

Wait, what?

KELVIN

Men get paid a tenth of what women do, and often they do much more of the work.

EDITH

That's what you think about when you watch porn?

KELVIN

Not usually, no.

EDITH

What do you think about when you're masturbating?

KELVIN

Really?

EDITH

Yes, if you can.

KELVIN

Japanese girls making out with each other.

(off her reaction)

You asked.

EDITH

Sorry.

KELVIN

I like to think about two young girls who don't really have any experience with men or sex or anything, they just have this burning need to kiss each other. Maybe they're practicing. I'm not sure what they're doing.

EDITH

And they just kiss? That's as far as it goes?

KELVIN

Well, they kiss for a while, and then I'm generally done. I'm no model of restraint.

EDITH

See? You can be goal-oriented.

KELVIN

What's the weirdest thing you ever did to research a story?

EDITH

Hmmm...one time, I went to therapy as somebody else.

KELVIN

What?

EDITH

I told the therapist all of my character's problems, all the things that had happened to her. And then figured out what my condition was.

(off his reaction)

(MORE)

EDITH (CONT'D)

I hated my mother. My character
hated her mother.

KELVIN

I can think of the stupidest thing
I ever did for money.

EDITH

Okay, what's that?

KELVIN

I ate money.

That wasn't what she expected him to say.

EDITH

Uh...

KELVIN

In third grade, this kid said he'd
pay me five dollars if I could eat
forty-one cents. First the dime,
then the penny, then the nickel,
and then the quarter.

EDITH

(disgusted)

But money is the dirtiest thing
there is.

KELVIN

I was eight. I almost threw up, but
I convinced myself I was supposed
to do it.

EDITH

I wouldn't put it past you. I saw
the way you handled that platter of
habaneros.

KELVIN

What?

EDITH

The first time I was in your bar.
That bar bet where you ate all the
peppers. You mopped the floor with
that frat boy. And he looked like
he was from Texas.

KELVIN

I actually hate hot peppers.

EDITH

Then what were you doing in a hot
pepper eating contest?

KELVIN

Uh, winning a hundred dollars?

EDITH

But, how could you stand it?

Kelvin, inspired, goes to his fridge and pulls out a jar,
which he unscrews.

KELVIN

Have you ever heard of miracle
fruit?

EDITH

No.

Kelvin shows her a handful of berries.

KELVIN

Synsepalum dulcificum. These
berries were originally discovered
in West Africa.

EDITH

Why are they called miracle fruits?

KELVIN

Let me show you.

Kelvin goes to his kitchen as Edith contemplates the berries.
He comes back with a lemon, which he cuts in half on a
cutting board.

Demonstrating, he eats one of the miracle fruits. He looks at
Edith: so what, right? Then he takes the lemon half and
sticks it in his mouth, tearing the flesh from the skin,
chewing and swallowing it without any sourness.

EDITH

It doesn't taste sour?

KELVIN

That's the miracle. Here, you try.

Edith eats one of the berries, then consumes the lemon, just
as Kelvin has. A spectrum of emotions radiates across her
face: surprise, pleasure. As she chews...

KELVIN (CONT'D)

Isn't that strange? The berry doesn't taste like much, but it has this insane aftereffect. It takes the worst out of anything. You could eat pickles, Limburger, anything.

Edith swallows and smiles. A moment of inspiration. This revelation has made Edith approve of Kelvin. She has found her guiding metaphor.

She kisses Kelvin hard, placing her hand behind his head.

He is clearly surprised, but kisses back, as best he can. They separate, coming up for air.

KELVIN (CONT'D)

I should put on some music.

EDITH

No, I think I should go.

KELVIN

Are you kidding? Where do you have to go.

EDITH

I'm sorry, Kelvin. You've been great. I got what I came for.

KELVIN

What the hell does that mean? You're really going? This was about to get good.

Edith has her purse and has made it to the door.

EXT. KELVIN'S OFFICE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Edith is already moving down the hallway to the elevator.

KELVIN

But Edith? We'll never know what could have happened!

EDITH

I think I can live with that.

Off of Kelvin, confused by her sudden departure.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Music cue: "Les Fleur," by Ramsey Lewis.

This instrumental version of Edith's Tomatina soundtrack returns as she re-imagines her story on the ride down.

AFRICAN VOICE

My dearest Edith: How long has it
been since we walked the streets of
Madrid together.

INT. EDITH'S CAR - NIGHT

She drives home, in full reverie.

AFRICAN VOICE

It seems like a long time ago, but
if I close my eyes, we are there
together.

EXT. WEST AFRICAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A HANDSOME WEST AFRICAN MAN (40) walks along a scenic mountain ridge. This is his voice over.

AFRICAN VOICE

I'm back on my family's miracle
fruit orchard. My family can't wait
to meet you.

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Edith is writing this down in her notebook, her rough draft.

She catches herself.

AFRICAN VOICE

I'm back on my family's miracle
fruit orchard. I only wish my
family were still alive, so they
could meet you, and our son.

She nods. Better.

EXT. MIRACLE FRUIT FARM - DAY

The handsome African is harvesting berries in a botanical setting.

AFRICAN VOICE

But as you know, I am the last of
my family line.

He takes one berry and places it in his mouth.

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - DAY

Edith places a miracle berry in her mouth as she writes. A bowl of them sits at her side, a bowl of lemons on her other side.

AFRICAN VOICE

These berries remind me of you,
because our love has sweetened
everything that comes after it.

She stops: too much?

EXT. WEST AFRICAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The African man harvests berries near a dangerous looking cliff.

AFRICAN VOICE

I hope to come visit next year,
after the spring planting. But
there are many dangers in this part
of the world. Who can say what may
happen?

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Now Edith is transcribing her notes into this man's handwriting.

AFRICAN VOICE

I am joyous that our love has borne
fruit. Forever yours,
Joaguin...Estragon...Egejuru.

She stops, folds the letter into one of the envelopes she got from Spain. She places an African stamp in the corner of the envelope.

There are other envelopes on the desk: the complete story.

Behind her, we see that she has re-papered the baby's room, in African batik style. Blue, for a boy.

End music.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Franklin, last semester's trouble student, reads a short story to another circular workshop.

FRANKLIN

"The Christmas tree looked metallic and cheap, with blinking lights, the kind of lights that looked like the kind of place where drunk horny moths might go late at night for anonymous sex. Yes, that was it. Dad was trying to save money this year, and he proved it by erecting a meat market for moths.""

Edith looks pleased, for once. Franklin braces himself.

EDITH

"A meat market for moths." That's great. How many drafts did that take to come to you?

FRANKLIN

Right away. I was just staring at my parents' Christmas tree and it just came to me. You like it?

EDITH

Yes, very much. Sometimes the first ideas are the best.

FRANKLIN

What should I do next?

EDITH

It's done. Send it out. Start another one.

Franklin smiles. Edith checks her watch: eleven-thirty.

EDITH (CONT'D)

That's it.

The class adjourns.

INT. CAFE - DAY.

Mabel and Edith are meeting for one of their lunches. The restaurant is decked out in Christmas decorations. Edith is dressed in black, and looks somber.

MABEL

Okay, you have to tell me what's wrong.

EDITH

It's Joaquin. He's gone.

MABEL

I don't understand. When did he get here?

EDITH

He was never here. He never could make it to visit. He was waiting for the delivery. He's passed on.

MABEL

He's dead?
(off her nod)
What happened?

EDITH

He fell off a cliff. He was harvesting berries, and he fell.

MABEL

Berries? I thought he was a tomato farmer.

EDITH

Yes, one side of his family grew tomatoes. But the other side grows miracle berries. Have you heard of miracle berries?

MABEL

(not caring about berries)
When is the funeral?

EDITH

Um, Tuesday, I think.

MABEL

You can't go?

EDITH

No, it's in Gabon, that's a five thousand dollar flight.

MABEL

Gabon?

EDITH

Yes, it's a republic in West Africa.

MABEL

I know that. I thought you said he was Spanish?

EDITH

I met him there. But his family is African.

MABEL

But he isn't Black, is he?

EDITH

Yes, he is. Was.

MABEL

I'm sorry, I didn't know that.

EDITH

I don't think it's that important.

MABEL

I don't either. But you showed me a photograph?

EDITH

Yes, he photographs lighter than he really is. He did, I mean.

MABEL

You seem to be taking it well.

EDITH

(concealing worry)

I do? I guess, I never knew him that well.

Mabel gives her a hug, which Edith returns in kind. But the deception of it plays on her face.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

Edith is planting seeds in her community garden patch. Looks like she's finally cleared it all up.

EXT. CHINATOWN CITY STREET - DAY

A Chinese New Year's celebration is in effect. They are ringing in the Year of the Rabbit.

Title: SIX WEEKS LATER

INT. EDITH'S OFFICE - DAY

Edith is sitting behind her orderly desk, reading one of Mabel's poems aloud.

EDITH

MP3. MP3. The M is for Moving. The
P is for Picture.
The three is for persistence. The
third try. The grandchild of a
soundman's ambition.
LP. LP. L for Long, P for Playing.
The LP is warm, but it can't run
through the park. A cassette brings
its hiss.
MP3. MP3. It isn't warm, this MP.
It can run, this MP. But how can it
be lossless? How can any of us
pretend to be lossless?
Mozart played for kings. Now he
hides in my phone.

Edith looks up from her reading. And sees Kelvin in her doorway, dressed for cold weather, in coat and scarf.

KELVIN

Hey.

Edith is shocked. He stays in the doorway, she behind her desk.

EDITH

What are you doing here?

KELVIN

You can come bother me at my job,
and I can't do the same for you?

EDITH

I never told you my last name.

KELVIN

I found that short story you told
me about, about the girl who hated
her mother? Wasn't hard from there.

EDITH

Well, it's nice to see you. But-

KELVIN

(interrupting)

I know you probably didn't want to see me again. I just wanted to know if you ever finished that story about me.

EDITH

I couldn't finish it. It just went nowhere. That happens sometimes.

KELVIN

I have to say something. You asked me what I think about when I'm masturbating.

EDITH

Kelvin-

KELVIN

No, let me finish. I've been trying to pay more attention to that since we last talked. It turns out that I think about you when I masturbate.

EDITH

God-

KELVIN

And not making out with Japanese girls or bondage fantasies or anything. Just you. I think about you and me.

EDITH

That's nice of you to say.

KELVIN

And I masturbate a lot. I know you don't want to give me a chance.

Kelvin removes his scarf. His neck tattoo is gone.

KELVIN (CONT'D)

I got rid of it. I don't need Princess Leia to fuck a droid to let the world know I'm my own man. But I do need you to give me a chance. I want to choose the womb.

Reveal that Mabel has been sitting in Edith's office this whole time. She was there to talk about her poetry. She was sitting inside the door, where Kelvin can't see.

EDITH

Kelvin, this is my friend Mabel.

Mabel gets up to leave.

MABEL

Charmed, I'm sure.

KELVIN

Oh. Nice to meet you, ma'am.

Mabel shakes his hand as she moves out the door.

MABEL

(you're a masturbator)

Firm grip.

(to Edith)

We'll talk later?

Edith nods, and she is alone with Kelvin.

EDITH

What happened to Madison?

KELVIN

I feel like we had to sleep with each other to find out that we didn't like each other.

EDITH

Maybe if you gave it more time...

KELVIN

I quit the bar. You were right about me. I've been all over the road. I want to focus on something that can change my life. I'm designing a sustainable gym that harnesses the energy of the people working out to keep the lights on and heat the showers and sauna.

EDITH

That sounds like a very good idea.

KELVIN

I'm not going to be jetsam any more. So, will you give me a chance?

EDITH

You are one of the most interesting people I've ever met. That isn't a euphemism. You have so much intellect and energy. You could be successful in so many ways, and right now I can only wonder which of them will provide your path. Imagination and logic don't always go together, but they do in you. And you probably don't need to hear this from me, but you're very handsome.

He smiles: this is going well.

EDITH (CONT'D)

But we do not have a future together.

KELVIN

Why not?

EDITH

I'm old enough to be your mother.

KELVIN

I knew that before I rode over here. That isn't a good enough reason.

Edith stands, with some difficulty. We see for the first time that she is now five months pregnant. Kelvin's eyes widen.

KELVIN (CONT'D)

Uh...

He takes a moment to compose himself.

KELVIN (CONT'D)

That looks like four months?

EDITH

Five.

KELVIN

So, I guess there's someone else.

EDITH

No.

KELVIN

But there was.

KELVIN (CONT'D)

Well, maybe you aren't seeing anyone right now, but whose baby is that?

EDITH

Yours.

KELVIN

Very funny.

EDITH

I'm carrying your child.

KELVIN

Immaculate conception, eh?

EDITH

No, I got pregnant at a fertility clinic, using your sperm.

Kelvin exhibits a range of emotions, from disbelief to shock, rage, acceptance. It all clicks.

KELVIN

I needed the money for concert tickets.

EDITH

That's flattering.

KELVIN

I needed money for tickets to see Jay-Z and Kanye, Watch the Throne tour. My friends joked about selling our bodily fluids. But you can only sell plasma once a month. We went to a fertility clinic in Lafayette. But I was the only one who passed the test. One of my friends didn't have a high enough IQ, and the other had a history of asthma. I went in on several occasions, until they told me they had enough of me. And, if you must know, I was probably thinking about Ashley, a girl at the gym, and her perfect, pear-shaped ass. I used to jog on the treadmill right behind her when she was using the Stairmaster. And I used to imagine that I was running up her ass.

EDITH

Thanks.

KELVIN

They promised me no one would ever know.

EDITH

They didn't but, you were on Facebook...I can explain. It was an accident.

KELVIN

What do you mean?

EDITH

I didn't order you. I didn't know if I wanted to have your child-

Kelvin backs out into the hallway. Edith follows him.

KELVIN

Stop saying that!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS.

Kelvin is backing away. This isn't at all what he expected to happen.

EDITH

-I'm sorry. I ordered something different, and there was a mix-up at the clinic, and I could have had a free abortion, but I didn't want an abortion, I wanted to know what my baby would be like. And I just needed to get to know you, so I could relax.

KELVIN

So, you're not writing a story about me?

EDITH

No.

KELVIN

And you weren't trying to fuck me?

EDITH

No.

KELVIN

Do you suppose I could buy back my
introduction to you?

EDITH

Yes, you can.

Kelvin leaves. Edith watches him walk down the hallway. As he
leaves earshot.

EDITH (CONT'D)

(to herself)

But I can't.

Edith turns to walk back into her office and sees Marcus
standing in the door of his office. How much did he hear?

MARCUS

So it's because I'm too old?

Edith rolls her eyes and moves back into her office...

INT. EDITH'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

...starting her ranting the moment she slams the door.

EDITH

No, it isn't because you're too
old, or too fat, or too black. It
isn't because I'm dating a Spanish
guy, or an African guy, or a
tattooed bartender half my age. It
isn't even because I'm pregnant.
It's because...

She's stumped.

EDITH (CONT'D)

It's because...

She stops. Why is it, again?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Edith opens her office door and walks back to Marcus who is
inside his office.

EDITH

All right. I'm single.

Marcus wasn't expecting this.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Do you want to go out *on a date*
with me sometime?

MARCUS

Uh, sure.

EDITH

Fine!

Edith moves back into her office and slams the door again.

INT. MABEL'S OFFICE - DAY

We join Edith in mid-conversation with Mabel.

EDITH

I'm sorry I lied to you. But I can
explain.

MABEL

I knew you were making it up. No
straight man would ever say his
favorite book is *Middlemarch*.

EDITH

I just wanted to have a child. I
would like to be married, sure. But
it wasn't happening on the right
timeline. And doing it the way I
did, seems so impersonal. And I
wanted her to feel like she was the
product of love.

MABEL

She will be. Your love.

EDITH

It's a he now, but thanks.

MABEL

How long were you going to stick
with your African Spaniard story?
Till he was grown?

EDITH

I don't know.

MABEL

What about the internet? What about
DNA? Don't you watch CSI? Edith,
you can't treat your children like
your novel!

EDITH

I know. I know.

MABEL

In four months you're going to publish your first draft.

EDITH

He's not a novel, I get it.

MABEL

He's going to be more like a play. And not on Broadway. When you have a baby, it's like you're workshoping off-Broadway.

EDITH

(amused)

Off Broadway?

MABEL

Off-off. Like Connecticut. Then you have a long time to make mistakes, learn what works, what doesn't. People won't have any idea if you're a bad mom till much later.

EDITH

I had no idea you knew so much about playwriting.

MABEL

I taught it one summer when Greg got pneumonia. I was horrible at it. Made me feel better about not having kids.

EDITH

(I feel better)

Thanks.

MABEL

How are you going to tell your mother?

Edith contemplates this. She hasn't figured this one out.

EDITH

Can't I just call her from Connecticut?

INT. EDITH'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT.

Edith is sitting at a well-appointed table with her parents. ALAN (65) is older and balder than the young man from that hippie coffee shop. NANCY (65) is older but well-preserved. One look at her judgmental gaze explains a lot about Edith.

Edith has just broken the news.

NANCY

So there's no Joaquin?

EDITH

No.

NANCY

And you aren't getting married?

EDITH

No time soon.

NANCY

You're doing it all by yourself?

EDITH

With a donor, but yes.

NANCY

It seems so extreme. I would have given you that chest anyway.

EDITH

Mom, take me seriously. I wanted my son to believe that the way his parents got together was special.

Nancy steals a glance at Alan, who isn't making eye contact.

EDITH (CONT'D)

Like the way you met Dad during Hurricane Edith.

NANCY

We had actually been going out for a few weeks.

EDITH

What?

NANCY

We met through mutual friends.

EDITH

Are you kidding?

NANCY

We didn't want a child, and the condom broke, and he asked his boss for a raise, and we got it. Otherwise, who knows what would have happened.

Edith doesn't know what to say.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Now, is there anything else we need to know about your Spanish child, or can we have ice cream?

EDITH

(as quick as she can)
My donor is Black. My son is biracial. I didn't plan it that way, but I'm fine with it and I hope you are too.

Nancy wasn't expecting this, but processes it quickly.

NANCY

Now can we have ice cream?

Nancy moves to the kitchen. Her dad, not a talker, speaks up.

ALAN

Well, I know one thing.

EDITH

What's that, Dad?

DAD

That kid's probably going to lose his hair.

Nancy returns with three bowls of ice cream and places one in front of Edith. Hers has two scoops: chocolate and vanilla.

NANCY

I know how you like options.

She looks up to see her mother smiling. Everything is fine.

INT. EDITH'S HOUSE - BABY'S ROOM

Edith is sitting in her old office/baby room. Her laptop is out, and she starts typing. Her story is entitled WOLF PEACH.

EDITH

(v.o.)

Joaquin spent the first hour of his date with Anna trying to convince her, in his broken English, that Florida was a series of islands.

As she types, we slowly RACK FOCUS toward the back wall.

EDITH (CONT'D)

She spent her share of the hour trying to convince him that they weren't on a date at all. Three drinks in a flamenco bar at midnight doesn't count as a date in Madrid. Spaniards call that lunch.

Where the wallpaper was pink, it is now blue, and where the daughter's name "Rosa" was painted, there is a boy's name:

REUBEN!!!

With three exclamation points.

FADE TO BLACK (though the name stays long enough to become the film's final image).

CREDITS.

*

VITA

Henry Griffin was born in 1969 in New York City, and has resided in New Orleans principally since 1980. He graduated from Loyola University with a B.A. in English in 1992. He became a professional screenwriter in 1996 after selling the option on his first screenplay, *Rock Scissors Paper*. He is the author of twelve original screenplays. He has also directed several award-winning films, including *Mutiny* (1999) and *Tortured by Joy* (2004). He has acted in several films and television shows, most notably *The Way of the Gun* (2000) and the HBO series *Treme* (2009-2013), on which he is a series regular. He has served as an artist-in-residence at UNO since 2007.